DIGGING DEEPER: TEXT ANALYSIS AS A STRATEGY IN THE
TEACHING OF ENGLISH LITERACY TO ADULT, NON-URBAN,
ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

by

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DECLARATION

To the best of my knowledge and belief the work in this thesis is original, except as acknowledged in the text, and the material has not been submitted in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

[Signature]
I would like to acknowledge the contributions of the following people with thanks:

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ABSTRACT

Aboriginal people from non-urban contexts across the Northern Territory of Australia have enrolled in large numbers with institutions offering them the opportunity for further education and qualifications which will lead to jobs in their home communities. Commonly, difficulties with English and English literacy hamper their chances of success.

This study focuses on the practice of educators who work with Aboriginal adult students from non-urban communities in the Northern Territory, with particular reference to their perceptions of students' difficulties with literacy in English and the strategies they currently employ to address these difficulties. The data for the study was obtained by means of a questionnaire which included a piece of text for analysis.

From the data emerges a picture of students who are highly motivated to learn, yet whose ability to successfully meet the requirements of the courses in which they are enrolled is being inhibited, at least in part, by their difficulties in comprehending English written text. A profile of the educators reveals a group of people concerned with students' low literacy levels, but who are also accountable to their employing institutions and are therefore torn between attending to students' literacy needs and ensuring that students work through the content of the course (usually accredited) within the time frame stipulated.

Few educators appear to have developed a comprehensive, systematic approach to the teaching of English/literacy. Their analysis of a particular newspaper article suggests that most educators have difficulty articulating the problems students are likely to encounter with English texts, and have few specific strategies to address them.

The implications of these findings for classroom practice and professional development are discussed. Drawing on theories of Systemic Linguistics, Proposition Theory and Critical Literacy, a strategy for discourse analysis is proposed which would incorporate the teaching of English, the teaching of the contemporary culture of English-speaking people in Australia and the teaching of the reading behaviours necessary to make meaning from English texts.
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CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND ITS CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction

This research project investigates some of the issues involved in the formal teaching of English literacy, for specific purposes, to adult Aboriginal students in non-urban contexts of the Northern Territory. Implicit throughout is the 'voice' of Aboriginal people who have clearly articulated their wish to learn English in order that they can usefully participate in their community's plans for self-determination and self-management. In this study it is assumed that the kind of English literacy required by students goes beyond that of a basic or purely functional nature—that is, a literacy which will enable them to shape the direction of their community in ways which build upon its Aboriginal foundations, not destroy them. The quality of literacy attained must enable students not only to comprehend but to critique and to transform. This study challenges the notion that students' own writing is a sufficient basis for comprehending English texts or becoming proficient in the practice of literacy. It will suggest that students can be assisted to develop a higher and more informed level of participation through being taught to read texts by other writers which are above their own current literacy levels.

Central to this study is the belief that support for the practitioners who work with these students—in the form of information about a more systematic approach to the teaching of English literacy in the adult Aboriginal context, especially through the use of text analysis—will produce both short-term and long-term benefits. In the short term educators will be challenged to examine and improve their current English literacy teaching practice. In the longer term they will develop the skills to promote in students English literacy skills of a kind that will enable them to take a critical and reflective stance as readers and writers, empowering them to fulfil their aspirations for themselves and their communities.
As a part of this study, educators' analyses of a selected text were used to ascertain their understandings about some of the textual features of English, to ascertain how they are currently meeting the task of assisting students to comprehend the texts with which they must engage, and to draw conclusions about the nature of the professional support required. An analysis of the results indicates that educators need to be assisted to draw students' attention to the nature of English texts at a much more detailed level and to enable them to engage with texts more critically, at the level of discourse.

Many of the views implied in this thesis derive from the researcher's own experiences in Aboriginal education over a period of thirteen years, extensive travel to non-urban communities, discussions with colleagues, especially Sue Reaburn, involvement in the Batchelor College RATE program, in particular the work of adult educator Leon White, and her exposure during that time to theories of Aboriginal education put forward by Harris, Christie, Graham, Marika and Yunupingu, the theories of English language/literacy teaching developed by Gray and the theories of text put forward by Halliday and Martin. These theories are fully explored in Chapter 2.

The first part of this chapter introduces the problem at the centre of this study. The rationale will show how the researcher's own experience of working with Aboriginal teachers alerted her to their desire to improve their own English and literacy skills in order to better teach the students from their communities. The community context in which educators and students work is described in some detail.

The second part of this introductory chapter describes the institutions which provide a variety of courses for adults from non-urban contexts and in which educators are employed. A more detailed exposition of the NT literacy context then positions literacy provision historically, describing current providers and some of the difficulties faced by educators. The chapter concludes with a brief reference to the theoretical framework underpinning the study; this is examined in depth in Chapter 2.
1.2 The research problem

Adult Aboriginal students from non-urban communities in the Northern Territory generally find it difficult to comprehend English texts; more specifically, for the purposes of this study, the English texts they encounter in the various tertiary courses in which they have enrolled. The problem at the centre of this research project can be stated in the form of two questions: What are these difficulties? How can students best be supported in their efforts to overcome them?

The students who live in non-urban communities typically experience English as a foreign language. Most of them speak three or four Aboriginal languages, but in spite of a degree of conversational competence, most would have little more than an elementary knowledge of written English gleaned from their experience at school. In the late 1980s curriculum writers developing English literacy courses for Aboriginal adult students from non-urban communities found it necessary to establish, as an entry point, a Grade 2 (Year 2) primary level of reading and writing ability. Most of the students who enrolled were found to be operating at about just that level, or lower (Culmsee, 1992, pers. comm.). The reasons for this are complex, however this study is not so much concerned with the reasons why, as in offering suggestions on how to deal with the situation.

1.3 Researching the problem

This problem of students' literacy levels is one which is difficult for a centrally based researcher to investigate directly. A closely related area for investigation, however, is the work of the educators who teach these students. These educators, most of them non-Aboriginal, are involved in delivering a range of different courses—teaching, health worker training, community management, aspects of police work—and, while literacy development is not the primary outcome of many of these courses, it is recognised as crucial to students' progress. In such an extreme cross-cultural context, it is quite likely that, for various reasons, educators experience difficulties in teaching English literacy. These difficulties may well be contributing to, or at least complicating, the central problem of students' literacy levels.
This researcher decided therefore to address the central problem of students' literacy levels somewhat indirectly, by selecting as the subjects of this particular study not the students themselves but the educators who are currently involved in teaching them. For the purposes of this study, that teaching may take place in the student's home community, in a different community or even in an urban centre, but the student's usual place of residence would normally be in the rural area. This restricts the study to those educators who work with students who experience English as a foreign language.

Because, as will be discussed later, the teaching of English literacy to adults in non-urban contexts of the Northern Territory is a little-researched area, it seems sensible that an initial study should survey the existing situation. A survey could supply information about the numbers of teachers and students in the field, the type of courses being undertaken, the institutions by which educators are employed, the teaching background of educators, their training and length of experience in the field of Aboriginal education and their perception of students' current motivation and progress.

However, since there had been so little research in the past to support teaching practice in this context, there is almost an obligation to present practitioners with urgent pedagogical assistance. In this study this will be achieved, to some extent, by the sharing of those literacy teaching strategies which experienced educators have found to be successful and others which are recommended in the literature. In addition it is argued in the following chapters that the particular strategy of discourse analysis, the analysis of an English text, is a potentially valuable technique through which many concepts about English, about the cultural concepts of English-speaking peoples, and about the nature of written language itself, can be taught simultaneously. It is quite possible that the strategy of text analysis is foreign to many educators. For others it may be a strategy which they have used but in a fairly superficial manner or is one which they are aware of, but lack the confidence to tackle. If any of the above is, in fact, the case, an important literacy teaching opportunity may be being lost.

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1 For the purposes of this study, those students who are immersed in an environment where their own or another Aboriginal language is generally used in social and business life, are said to be learning English as a foreign language. Those students who have a language other than English as their first language, but are now immersed in an English-speaking environment (at least outside the home) are classed as learning English as a second language.
In summary, the purpose of this study is twofold. It provides a general profile of the educators, students and courses involved in literacy teaching in non-urban contexts of the Northern Territory, and offers immediate practical assistance to educators—firstly by documenting successful strategies for the teaching of English literacy nominated by educators themselves and secondly by describing a particular method for analysing English texts which has the potential to teach many aspects of literacy. Ultimately, it is anticipated that students will be the beneficiaries.

The study will contribute to the overall picture of adult literacy education in Australia by describing a context for adult literacy which, up till now, has been a neglected area for research. It will draw attention to some of the tensions and considerations which inform and constrain the teaching and learning of English/literacy in these situations. Unlike many other studies it has a major focus on practice, and, with the particular model of discourse analysis it proposes, offers a comprehensive, theoretically based, reading strategy which has application for other adult contexts.

1.4 Rationale for the study

The motivation for this particular study emerged out of the researcher's personal experience of working with Aboriginal teachers, particularly those from homeland centre schools, and out of a desire to support the aspirations they have for themselves and their communities. These teachers had often commented on their desire to improve their skills in order to better teach the students from their community. One homeland centre teacher from central Australia expressed it this way, '[we have to] teach our children to help their fathers speak up for their land'. This, she clearly saw, as including greater knowledge of English. This request for English is strictly pragmatic. And it is a request for English, not necessarily literacy. But English is a written language and the acquisition of English at a useful level is almost impossible without the acquisition of literacy.

A tentative enquiry in north east Arnhem Land about a show of interest in the potential availability of English language programs at elementary, intermediate and advanced levels, produced an overwhelmingly positive
response from homeland centre teachers, assistant teachers and teachers in community schools and even Aboriginal principals (Donovan, 1991, pers. comm.). This study is not motivated, however, by any desire to bring universal English literacy to Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people have lived and continue to live satisfying lives without the need for such literacy. As people who are print literate from an early age, Westerners have little comprehension of the way in which people from an oral tradition proceed from childhood into adulthood, developing orality to degrees of sophistication no longer possible in a literate society. As western educators we must beware the temptation to become 'missionaries of literacy' (Wafer, 1983, p. 7). As Luke (1990, p. 4) so rightly comments 'the assumption that literacy naturally makes one a better person by changing one's internal cognitive capacities and moral fibre, retains a great deal of currency'. All English speakers (including this researcher) have a vested interest in spreading the influence of the English language, albeit ostensibly in response to requests from Aboriginal people. We tend to hear most clearly and respond with greatest alacrity to those requests that match our own self-interest. While many Aboriginal people do indeed wish to learn English, as educators we must be mindful of any imperialistic urges that lie beneath the surface. These can only be tempered by being explicit about our own bias and by being explicit about the non-neutrality of the language we speak. We also need to remember that the very print literacy we value so highly also constricts our vision. Written text mediates experience in particular ways.

This study adopts the position that the English language itself is not neutral. Like all languages, it imposes a particular view of the world upon its speakers. This is commonly regarded as the Whorfian position, being derived from the work of Benjamin Lee Whorf (1956), and in contemporary writings on Aboriginal education it finds its most articulate expression in the work of Michael Christie.

With the spread of English is implied the adoption of a particular world view—a kind of 'colonisation of the mind' (Mc Taggart, 1988). Yet it is clearly expected by the wider society that Aboriginal people will learn English, and that, in some way, it is considered 'un-Australian' of them not to do so. At the same time, few non-Aboriginal Australians learn an
Aboriginal language which might enable them to look at the world in a way other than the way their own language makes possible.

Another factor which motivates this study is a desire to support the work of Batchelor College. In 1985 documents prepared for the reaccreditation of the teacher education program at the college set the direction for programs for the next decade. This document deliberately positioned that institution as a site which values community-based education, Aboriginal control, a both-ways approach to teaching/learning and post-colonial views about the role and function of education for Aboriginal people. The college conducts programs in Education, Health Education, Community Studies and Australian Languages, among others, and over the years this researcher has been impressed by the way the college, and particularly the School of Education, has striven to meet the needs of students from non-urban communities. Eschewing the temptation to impose Western ideas on highly developed systems for living and for education which already exist and have served people well, the policy of the college has been to value and to develop students' confidence in what they already know. Lecturers present students with solutions devised for Western contexts and then work with them to evolve new, locally appropriate solutions which are still supportive of their identity as Aboriginal people. Faced with such a challenge and with severe time constraints—the courses are the same length as those of other colleges which are not required to go through this process—separate courses for the development of students' own literacy skills have not been possible. Currently, students must upgrade their English language and literacy skills as they proceed through the course although extra support is available to students from external tutors.

This last is the situation which pertains in other institutions as well. Students must endeavour to cope with the literacy demands of the course, in most cases relying heavily on the assistance of a DEET tutor. Time with the DEET tutor is largely taken up with completing students' assignments. Yet again there is little time for literacy teaching per se. While the notion of learning language in context, that is, as one needs it for a specific purpose, is very sound and practice may lead to a degree of improvement over time, insufficient progress in developing English literacy seriously
obstructs learning and leads to students abandoning their studies, or having to prolong them over an unacceptably long period of time.

If separate courses for the teaching of English or literacy, or both, are not considered feasible, or even desirable, by institutions themselves, then it is vital that the educators who conduct the various courses in which Aboriginal adult students are enrolled understand that the teaching of the 'content' of a course is inseparable from the teaching of the language and the literacy involved. Teaching 'literacy' is inseparable from teaching the knowledge, practices and attitudes that it implies. Opportunities for improving students' English and literacy skills *en courant* must be maximised.

1.5 The geographical context of the research problem

The educators and students in this study are located in every region of the Northern Territory. The institutions which conduct courses are based in the major population centres of Darwin and Alice Springs, with annexes or branches in regional communities: Katherine, Tennant Creek and Nhulunbuy. For these institutions the logistics of travel are complex. The cost in financial and human energy terms is considerable. Educators and students demonstrate considerable commitment by continuing to persevere in their work and study, year after year, in the face of distance, separation from families and the exhaustion of travel. (See map.)

1.6 The community context of English in the Northern Territory

The kind of communities from which students come include both large, heterogeneous communities consisting of many different language groups, and much smaller communities of extended family groups on pastoral excisions and homeland centres. Larger communities consist of anywhere from 500 to 2000 people and have developed over time the infrastructure necessary to support such a population. Housing, vehicles and essential services are locally maintained as far as possible. An airstrip makes regular travel to and from other communities and urban centres
possible, and brings in a regular stream of short-term visitors. Smaller communities usually have little in the way of infrastructure, and community members must travel to the larger community for supplies and emergencies. The social, economic and political business of rural communities is largely conducted in Aboriginal languages. This may be a traditional language or a creole. Even business (in the Western sense of the term), which once upon a time necessitated the involvement of non-Aboriginal people in key positions, is increasingly transacted in an Aboriginal language as community members assume these roles.

Map 1. NT: Showing the area for literacy provision
As most Aboriginal communities have a policy of self-determination and self-management they eventually wish to control both the day-to-day operations and the long-term future of their communities. Community members must therefore be sufficiently well-informed to make these important decisions. In some communities this means that non-Aboriginal people are employed by the community council and directed by them. In others it means that community members carry out a growing number of functions. To do this they must deal with servicing organisations based in the major towns and staffed largely by non-Aboriginal personnel. Generally, it is only the need to deal with outside agencies, or the arrival of visitors to the community, or the presence of English-speaking residents, which generates real life contexts for the use of English. Excursions to urban centres by family members are not uncommon, however interactions there tend to be with relatives or other Aboriginal people. When necessary a more confident speaker takes charge of the English communication.

Most community members encounter English at school and have developed an elementary knowledge of the language. Exposure to television and video can mean the development of a passive vocabulary, but outside school and other workplace contexts—council office, store etc—there is little opportunity for practice. Some young people leave their communities to attend secondary education institutions in urban centres of the Northern Territory or interstate, and these students return with considerably higher oral English skills and slightly higher levels of written English skills than those of the general community. However the opportunity to use these skills is so limited that they often lose them.

1.7 The context for literacy in non-urban communities

In rural communities there are usually few written texts available outside the school. The most valued knowledge is not that which comes from books but that whose source is a respected community member, or an outsider with standing in the community. The advent of radio telephones, telephones, tele and video conferencing and tape recorders has supported
people's general preference for communicating in the oral mode. In communities these modern communication devices are used extensively.

A strong push for self management in most communities has resulted in community members being increasingly encouraged to take up positions in these areas where English and English literacy is required to some degree. To gain the required knowledge and skills for those positions many enrol as students in appropriate courses. The teachers of these courses are presented with students who may be well motivated to learn, but who have little opportunity to use English or to develop their practice of literacy.

1.8 Attitudes to literacy in non-urban communities

In communities, the practice of literacy has not yet impacted greatly on people's everyday lives. The most valued activity in Aboriginal society is cooperation or participation with significant others; by contrast, writing and reading are anti-social. They are solitary pursuits. To engage in them, one must isolate oneself from family members or from the group and there are strong social pressures against this kind of behaviour in Aboriginal communities. Students of literacy who come from more traditionally oriented communities are, in effect, being asked to behave in ways that are culturally unfamiliar. They are in a dilemma. On the one hand they need to develop literacy for the purposes of the community. On the other hand this will mean behaving in ways not acceptable to the community. Each student must find his or her own ways of resolving this dilemma. 'Self-determination' may also mean that many choose not to be put in the position of choosing (Reaburn, 1993, pers. comm.).

If it is happening at all in any real sense, the shift to literacy is happening slowly. In larger communities most community members would have had some exposure to schooling and encountered simple printed materials over a period of at least four years. The net result of this limited exposure will often be illiteracy in functional terms. Nevertheless, a familiarity with the use of literacy is developing, as people become

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2At the outset of this research project this researcher's understandings about the relationship between orality and literacy were principally informed by the work of the Jesuit scholar Walter Ong and Marshall McLuhan.
acustomed to dealing with various government and non-government agencies represented in the community, e.g., the clinic, the store, the school, the bank, the airline, the agency dealing with different allowances or pensions. There is also recognition of the status and increased access to resources which is available to those relatives who develop literacy skills (Reaburn, pers. comm.).

The desire for English is driven firstly by a need to be politically aware, particularly with respect to custody of land, and secondly by the need to continue to be strong as Aboriginal people through co-opting Western education (including literacy) to that end. However the shift which is required in order to operate increasingly in the written mode appears to be much more complex than simply the decoding of signs on a page. Because it moves speech from the oral-aural to a new sensory world, that of vision, [the written word] transforms speech and thought as well (Ong, 1982, p. 84, my italics). From a social and cultural perspective 'learning to read is not like putting on a new suit of clothes. It involves a reorientation to and a restructuring of one's world'. In effect a 'betrayal ...of cultural or ethnic identity' may be involved (Smith, 1986, p. 273).

An ambivalence about moving into literacy in these circumstances is not difficult to understand. Yet literacy also offers a great deal. Kress (1993, pers. comm.) sees literacy, especially writing, as a major cultural resource, in that it makes available to a society (and to the individuals within it) 'unique representational resources for constructing themselves'. Literacy could give voice to the aspirations and concerns of Aboriginal communities in a way that is socially valued by the wider society, but, in the process, people's lives and lifestyles will be irrevocably changed.

1.9 Quality of literacy

If the cost of literacy is potentially so high, the ability to 'read and write', or the acquisition of a 'basic literacy' (whatever that may mean), seems an inadequate exchange. Surely, the literacy practices students are guided to develop must be of a quality that will enable them to critically reflect on their situations and to take an active role in shaping their own lives and that of their community. In Chapter 2 Wells proposes four different levels of literacy competency: 'performative', 'functional', 'informational' and
'epistemic'. World renowned educator Paulo Freire insists that literacy must be for 'liberation' not 'domestication' (Freire, in Berggren, 1975): speakers, readers and writers are conceived to be active shapers of their own future, not passive recipients.

1.10 A brief history of English literacy teaching in the Northern Territory

Over the years different approaches to the teaching of English literacy have been tried in Aboriginal community schools with limited success. In the early 1970s the use of 'basal readers' was widespread. This 'technicist' approach (Walton, in Luke & Gilbert, 1993) was founded on the notion of sequential learning; of building up skills from part to whole and then teaching them in a recommended order. The 'natural language learning' model which followed, and which was based on the way children learn their first language, influenced literacy teaching in the 1980s. (See Walton, 1993, pp. 40-42, for an analysis of the unsuitability of these approaches in Aboriginal contexts.) Currently, English and literacy teaching in the Northern Territory is being influenced by the 'genre' approach. In this approach, there is an emphasis on explicit teaching of the different text types and registers of English, in an attempt to give students 'conscious control over [English's] technologies' (Ibid, p. 43).

Mirroring developments in language and literacy pedagogy, the teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL) has, at various times, emphasised a structured building-block approach to language learning, a more 'natural', communicative approach, and a language-across-the-curriculum approach; that is, the notion that every teacher is an English teacher. More recently the emphasis has been on the functional 'genre' approach of the Systemic Linguistic school and the notion that school is a context-reduced environment which requires a particular use of language and particular behaviours about which teachers must be explicit. These understandings have taken hold largely in the specialised field of ESL. Classroom teachers may be aware that students' difficulties have to do with language but generally, in the experience of this researcher, they have little specific knowledge of the critical relationship between language and learning and the ways in which students can be assisted to overcome these difficulties.
1.11 Developing a profile of the educators

In the Northern Territory there are approximately seventy-five full-time educators involved in conducting courses which involve Aboriginal adults from non-urban contexts, and many more are employed on a part-time or casual basis. Depending partly upon their particular role, and partly upon the particular terminology of their employing body, these full-time educators are variously termed 'lecturers', 'tutors' and 'adult educators'. They are drawn from a range of educational and teaching backgrounds—primary, secondary and tertiary—and bring a variety of personal skills, knowledge and experience to the task. There is also a pool of approximately 100 part-time educators available to all Aboriginal and Islander students for assistance as required. These support personnel are known as 'DEET tutors'. They are located in communities all around the Northern Territory. DEET tutors are often unemployed teachers at home with young children or partners of people employed on communities.

As well as providing important statistical information, the profile was developed to include information about what procedures educators are currently using to detect any textual difficulties students are encountering and what strategies they are implementing to overcome these difficulties. How much knowledge do educators themselves have about English texts—can they 'see' a text from the point of view of their students, at least to some degree? As highly competent readers themselves, do they have an understanding of some of the difficulties inherent in a text for readers who come from a different linguistic and cultural background? What strategies do they use for dealing with these difficulties? How do they deal with meanings that are foreign to students? Do they utilise students' own linguistic and cultural background in the teaching of English in any systematic way? Is text analysis currently being used as a teaching strategy? What do educators mean when they say they use text analysis? Do they have a systematic way of approaching it?

These are some of the questions this researcher sought to address in building up a profile of educators.

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3 Officers of the Northern Territory Open College (NTOC) which is part of the Northern Territory Department of Education

4 Part-time employees of the Department of Education, Employment and Training
1.12 The providers

Batchelor College is by far the largest provider of courses for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory with two campuses, one at Batchelor and the other at Alice Springs. The prospectus describes it as 'a specialist, multi-purpose Institute of Tertiary Education'. Students can take courses in primary teaching, adult education, health work, community management, office administration, broadcasting and journalism, languages and linguistics, recreation and youth work and lands, parks and wildlife management. There are three schools: Education Studies, Health Studies and Community Studies. Courses are offered at certificate, associate diploma and diploma levels. Entry to courses is determined by community support, student motivation and the ability to operate in English and literacy at a minimum level of proficiency.

Students enrol for a minimum of one year, with Certificate courses generally taking two years, Associate Diploma courses three years and Diploma courses four years to complete. With approval from their communities, students may choose to complete their studies in one continuous block, or elect to complete their course in modules, one year at a time, returning to live and work in the community in between modules. The different modules within courses are called Stages, being stages in students' development towards achieving their final goal. Because of the need of new students to improve their study skills, Stage 1 of the Associate Diploma courses takes place over two years and functions as an 'access' or 'bridging' course. After Stage 1, students must continue to develop their literacy skills incidentally, as the course proceeds, although extra support for assignment work and assistance with reading is available from DEET tutors who are employed on a part-time basis, as requested by students.

While students are expected to do a certain amount of academic reading, courses are not predominantly readings-based. There are several reasons given for this: students are not sufficiently fluent in academic English to cope, especially in the early stages; there are few readings in students' own languages; and existing materials are considered to be ethnocentric.

While there are many similarities between classroom interaction in an Aboriginal community school and an urban, multicultural classroom, there are also spectacular dissimilarities. These reasons, to do with language, values, cultural dissonance, ethnocentrism of curriculum, patterns of decision making and in the extent and nature of community development are extensive, profound and well documented. To Batchelor students these differences outweigh
the similarities. Where are the readings written by Aboriginal teachers and researchers which talk to the students about such things? The professional literature is only just beginning to emerge and there is still very little at the level of classroom practice.

Reaccreditation Document for the Associate Diploma of Teaching (Aboriginal Schools) & Diploma of Teaching (1991)

Nungalinya College offers Certificate and Diploma courses in Bi-Cultural Life Studies, Community Organising Studies and Theological Studies. Students must also be sponsored by their communities. They are given the opportunity to complete part of their course by extension—that is, off campus—or they may choose to be resident in Darwin for the duration of their course. A full-time literacy coordinator is employed to work with lecturers and to provide support and assistance to students. Each year a three-week English intensive workshop is provided for students. Only the Diploma of Theology requires a prerequisite—the completion of the Certificate course. Like those at Batchelor College, students have access to DEET tutors.

The Northern Territory Open College was established by the Northern Territory Department of Education specifically to deliver education in the distance mode to secondary age and adult students living in non-urban communities across the Northern Territory. It is not a college as such, but rather a network of regional centres linked to a 'central office' base. 'Adult educators' are based regionally in larger centres or locally in rural communities, depending upon student numbers. They conduct course modules with the assistance of a curriculum document which provides supportive guidelines and assessment procedures. There are no entry requirements and so beginning students bring varying degrees of competency to the course. The Certificate in Access to Employment and Further Study, known as the ACCESS course, is designed to develop students' English, literacy and cross-cultural skills in the context of preparing them for the different employment situations available to them locally in: art and craft production and sales; office work; trades; health and education; lands, parks and wildlife management; policing; the media; and community management. DEET tutors are available for extra assistance if necessary.

The Faculty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies within the Northern Territory University provides bridging courses for Aboriginal people who wish to study at tertiary level. Aboriginal students from rural
communities can live in Darwin and enrol in these courses. Students who come from non-urban communities are usually placed in the Preliminary or General Studies courses because of the need to improve their literacy levels and their general knowledge about the wider society.

The Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD) offers a range of courses for students in central Australia. Unfortunately, although invited to take part, no educators from this institution are represented in the study.

1.13 Some of the potential difficulties faced by educators

The task of an educator in an Aboriginal community context is complex and fraught with difficulty. In this researcher's experience educators are often torn between having to work within the constraints of departmental expectation and regulation, and having to be flexible in the face of the reality of day-to-day life on a community. The timing and style of the courses educators are required to conduct are often in conflict with the typical rhythms of community life. Courses can be disrupted by irregular attendance. Other events, which may occur spontaneously in the community and which enable students to fulfil obligations or to maintain important relationships, take precedence. Family worries contribute to program disruption. These are times of rapid change for communities. Aboriginal people in the 1990s have to contend with more sickness, more tragic accidents and more family deaths than most other Australians.

Nor does the 'teaching moment' necessarily occur in the location or at the time planned for it to occur. Spontaneity and 'readiness to begin' are traits of a society which highly values individual autonomy. One educator tells of weeks of having to chase up a particular student for lessons and always other events had taken priority, then going out hunting with a group of women and being caught totally unprepared when, during a break, that particular student announced that she was now ready to do some work (Quinn, 1993, pers. comm.).

Educators may be unaware that the Western notions that Aboriginal people find so problematic—the socio-cultural constructs of 'progress', 'development', 'ownership'; linear notions of time; Western logic and
ideas of causality—are actually encoded in the English language itself (Whorf, 1956). To native speakers, their presence is all but invisible. However, until educators become aware of their existence, and can understand some of the difficulties students from a very different orientation to the world face in comprehending English texts, they will not be able to begin to address them. Some, having come from a background in secondary or tertiary education, have not been specifically trained to teach literacy. Only a few are specially trained to teach English as a second or foreign language and even those who are, may not be ready to deal with the cultural and political dimensions of literacy. Others, with experience in primary and secondary education, may be unfamiliar with principles of adult education. All are likely to be constrained by time, the amount of work students must cover and the level of English literacy and cultural knowledge students bring with them.

There are few guidelines available about the teaching of English or literacy to adults from traditionally oriented communities. Educators may have a range of ideas about what constitutes literacy for students—from notions of 'basic literacy' to the development of a social-critical literacy (F. Christie, 1992a). Some educators may see the solution to students' difficulties as 'going back to basics', but by this they do not usually mean teaching students the fundamental notions or principles about the English language, or about literacy, or about making meaning from a piece of written text. The suggestion often means a return to methods generally associated with the infant school. This, however, ignores the knowledge, skills and experience adults bring to the learning situation and such pedagogy does not align well with principles of adult education.

There is a dearth of reading materials available to educators that are designed for adults with low literacy skills and that might supplement the course work students are doing, or be included in the course itself as required texts. Much of the material which is available and of interest (Beattie, 1993), educators in the community context might well consider too difficult for students to tackle. Many of them may subscribe to the notion that, to be appropriate, reading material has to be at a basic or beginner level. It is the contention of this research, however, that, provided student motivation is high, texts that are above students' own literacy levels can be used to students' benefit. This is if maximum support
is provided, and if texts are studied in such a way that fundamental understandings about literacy, English and the context of the text are taught simultaneously.

Educators are often faced with students who lack confidence in their ability to learn English literacy, having experienced only limited success at school. The methodology they employ and the personal relationships they develop with students are crucial. 'Failure', in any formal sense, is experienced as a rejection of the individual. It is seen as the placing of the 'ideal' before the 'real', the placing of some abstract concept of perfection before the responsibility to nurture the integrity of a unique human being. It announces the breakdown of the relationship between teacher and student and shames the individual within the group. Educators therefore are expected to find ways of diagnosing student difficulties; of developing strategies which will assist with these difficulties; of challenging students as adults; while providing a 'safe' learning environment in which students are supported until they experience success.

1.14 Methodology in brief

As a later chapter on methodology explains in detail, this research project is a qualitative investigation which makes use of a questionnaire to explore the knowledge and understandings of a selected group of educators about student difficulties with written English.

1.15 The significance of the present study

This present study was warmly welcomed by the institutions involved, and this researcher was given every assistance in accessing staff, because it was recognised as 'timely' (Turnbull, 1993, pers. comm.). It involved educators from a range of institutions which do not normally have much to do with each other. The research itself was supported by the Northern Territory Department of Education. Since there is no one over-arching employing body, it is unlikely that such a comprehensive investigation would have been undertaken otherwise. By sharing information in this way there may be some mutual benefit to both educators and institutions.
The overall picture which emerges will certainly contribute to general knowledge of the field.

Unlike recent national and Northern Territory adult literacy research (Wickert, 1989; Holland et al., 1990; and Christie et al., 1992) this study focuses on teaching practice. In this sense it makes a unique contribution. It documents successful teaching strategies—those with which educators feel they are experiencing success—as well as those strategies for teaching English literacy which are recommended elsewhere in the literature.

Finally, recommendations are made concerning: a particular approach to discourse analysis which might be successfully employed in future English literacy courses for non-urban Aboriginal adults; the nature of the training and support which should be provided to teachers, for example, through teacher training programs, induction programs and Departmental inservice programs; pointers for study choices for teachers; and recommendations for further study.

1.16 Assumptions that influenced the design of the study

There are several major assumptions which influenced the design of this study.

It is assumed that principles of adult education are the most culturally appropriate for working with Aboriginal students, regardless of their age.

While Kidd (1973) in Brookfield (1986), likens the quest for a general theory of adult learning to the quest for Eldorado, given that '[l]earning activities and learning styles vary so much with physiology, culture, and personality that generalised statements about the nature of adult learning have very low predictive power' (p. 25), some principles have been identified, notably by Brundage and Mackeracher (in Brookfield 1986) which seem to have stood the test of time. Adherence to these principles provides a learning environment where the atmosphere is non-threatening and supportive of experimentation, where students' past experience is drawn upon and valued, where both teacher and students collaborate in the teaching/learning process, and where the learner is
viewed as an autonomous, self-motivated member of a community, having roles and responsibilities beyond the classroom. It is considered by this researcher that these are desirable teaching/learning principles for the adult Aboriginal education context, congruent with the teaching/learning styles preferred by students themselves (see the discussion of Ganma theory in Chapter 2).

It is assumed that, if educators' awareness is increased, firstly about the nature of the English language itself, and secondly about possible student difficulties, it is their students who will be the ultimate beneficiaries.

A third assumption of this study is that, because they themselves use it in highly complex ways, educators who are native English speakers (or highly proficient second-language speakers of English) know a great deal about the English language and how it works. However this knowledge is usually tacit and unexplored. As this researcher discovered many years ago as a brand new, non-trained ESL support teacher, what is needed first of all is a shift from being a listener who thinks only of what the speaker is saying, to being a listener who also takes note of how it is being said and what this indicates about aspects of the language which have already been mastered and aspects which are causing difficulty. Once this kind of shift has been made, language teaching ideas will be welcomed and used.

Fourthly, it is assumed (again from this researcher's own experience) that simple exposure to spoken and written English, or even practice over time, is not sufficient. Without specific teaching, learners will reach a plateau in their language and literacy development and make little further progress. It is vital for learners to write their own texts5 and to jointly construct others, however this research project is premised in the belief that there is also considerable benefit to be obtained in studying texts which have been written by other authors, and which are more complex than readers themselves can produce. While it is freely acknowledged that writing is the most empowering aspect of the practise of literacy, reading (especially from a critical standpoint) is assumed to be crucially important in scaffolding its development.

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5Taylor (1993) points out that when the goal is to developing a functional level of literacy there is a focus on reading because the primary goal is 'consensus or convergence' (p. 146). 'It is only writing which can create the possibility of dissent. If I can read, I can follow what you want to say to me. But if I can write, you can read what I want to say to you' (p. 146).
In the fifth instance, it is assumed that the study of a text can be approached in different ways and that each will contribute to broadening and deepening the reader's comprehension: the text can be 'read': as language structure and cohesion (text-as-structure) (Halliday); as socio-cultural notions or ideas (text-as-ideology) (Kintsch, van Dijk); as discourse (text-as-discourse) (Foucault, Kress, Gee) and as social construction (text-as-construction-of-reality) (Luke, Fairclough). These ways of approaching a text and the theories which underpin them are described in Chapter 2 and further developed in later chapters.

Lastly it is this researcher's personal experience that, once they themselves are aware of the kind of difficulties students face in comprehending a text, teachers are highly creative at finding ways to teach.

1.17 Theories underpinning the study

A number of theoretical frameworks have influenced this study: three different, but relevant approaches to text analysis and comprehension; two opposing ideas about the nature of knowledge or truth; two theories of education, one a composite of views on teaching adults, the other an Aboriginal theory of education for Aboriginal students; and one theory from the field of educational psychology about how learning occurs and how it can be facilitated. All of these, it is considered, have implications for the teaching of English/literacy in adult Aboriginal contexts.

These ideas are developed more fully in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 2

LITERACY ISSUES: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR AN ADULT, CROSS-CULTURAL CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1 a range of factors is described which contribute to the problems with English texts experienced by adult Aboriginal students from non-urban contexts of the Northern Territory. A suggestion that in-depth text analysis (using texts which interest, yet challenge the reader) might address some of these difficulties is posited. In Chapter 2 some theories relevant to text analysis and their potential for teaching and learning in these contexts, are reviewed.

Chapter 2 falls into five main sections. In the introductory section this research is contextualised within the area of previous research into adult literacy in Australia. Some definitions of literacy are then examined which indicate the problematic nature of mainstream assumptions for minority groups. This is followed by a proposed continuum of literacy competency—the degree or quality of literacy which can be developed. The second section looks at certain issues pertinent to the teaching of literacy in cross-cultural contexts and raised by the apparent failure of previous programs are noted. In section three a review of three approaches to text or discourse is then undertaken to show how all three have relevance in a cross-cultural context, are complementary to each other and fit within the wider framework of Discourse theory. Section four consists of a closer discussion of English, its origins, and its written form and articulates some of the difficulties readers face in comprehending English texts. Some potentially useful strategies for addressing these difficulties are listed. The final section of the chapter reviews teaching strategies from the literature which may have relevance for the adult, cross-cultural context of this study and following that some pedagogical issues relevant to adult learning and teaching are discussed. Lastly these findings are reviewed for their relevance to the study of text with students.
2.2 Current adult literacy research

Several projects have been or are being carried out in adult literacy which provide a context for this study. In 1989, a survey of Australian adult literacy was conducted in every state of Australia except the Northern Territory. This study, No Single Measure (Wickert, 1989), found that most adults do not read for recreation. Their reading and writing are usually work specific. Many Australian adults have trouble with tasks of even moderate complexity. For non-English-speaking respondents the situation was the same. Almost half found it necessary to seek help with official documents; many others found them completely inaccessible. No single factor emerged as a sufficient explanation for these difficulties with literacy. Significant factors include the age at which a person learned to speak or read English, his/her level of formal schooling, and the availability of reading material in the childhood home. These findings suggest that non-urban Aboriginal students in the Northern Territory would certainly be in a high-risk, low-literacy category.

In an attempt to redress the omission of the Northern Territory from the survey, some funding was obtained to carry out the survey in the Northern Territory (Christie, Clark, Gerot and Palmer, 1993). It was understood by the researchers that a separate study would be funded to target Aboriginal people from non-urban contexts and that the two studies would complement each other. However this other study did not, in fact, eventuate. The survey was therefore limited to urban contexts and excluded Aboriginal students from non-urban contexts.

A national report on English literacy for adults was prepared by the New South Wales TAFE Commission and the Northern Territory (Holland et al., 1990). Some of the course providers represented in the current study—Batchelor College, Nungalinya College and the Northern Territory Open College—took part in this national exercise. The researchers found that there was enormous diversity in curriculum activity in terms of 'quality, nature and intent' (p. 2). For example, there seems to be little consistency in assessment procedures, other than that these should be in accordance with 'good practice principles'. The authors concede that, 'while there is considerable professional concern by educators in the field to improve their teaching practice, there has not been an accompanying
understanding of the need for a curriculum framework to encompass and provide a rationale for the teaching of literacy'. The impression gained is that currently adult literacy in Australia lacks cohesion and consistency.

The latest addition to publications in the adult literacy field is just such a framework—the National Framework of Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Competence (Cope, Kalantzis et al., 1993). This document provides a curriculum structure within which language and literacy competence can be assessed. The focus is on language competence to achieve particular social goals in particular social contexts. Three stages of competence in a new language skill are identified: assisted competence, independent competence and collaborative competence. Detailed descriptors of the different competencies are provided and can be used to assess a student's progress.

Two of the authors of this framework have recently been commissioned by the School of Education Studies at Batchelor College to 'address literacy problems hindering effective teacher education for Aboriginal people in remote communities'. Their brief is to:

- Identify and develop a framework for English language and literacy competencies appropriate to each level of the courses offered...
- Develop a staff development package of sample learning tasks and teaching strategies which will ensure that the students consciously develop the appropriate skills within the context of their professional studies.

The results of this project will have important implications for the teaching of literacy within courses.

The TAFE National Staff Development Committee is also planning a large professional development project in 1994 for Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) teachers working with rural remote and possibly urban adult literacy learners. This project will identify models of good practice in ALBE curricula and teaching strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners across a range of courses whose primary focus is ALBE or which have a mixed vocational and literacy/numeracy focus.

The field of Aboriginal adult literacy appears to be attracting an increasing amount of attention.
2.3 Definitions of literacy

As Wells (1991, p. 51) points out, 'how one defines literacy affects almost all the other decisions that have to be made'.

Literacy can be defined either in a very broad sense or in a narrower, more specific sense. Viewed broadly, literacy is a kind of behaviour, a way of operating by 'reading' one's world. Paulo Freire viewed literacy in this broad sense, interpreting it as 'a quality of consciousness' (Berggen and Berggen, 1975, p. 18), that is 'an attitude of creation and re-creation, a self-transformation, producing a stance of intervention in one's context' (Freire, in Walsh, 1991, p. 6). For Freire the practice of literacy becomes the practice of freedom, leading to liberation through transformation. In this view literacy is a technology for change.

The danger with such a broad view is that the development of literacy takes on messianic overtones, being equated in some way with 'social salvation' (Taylor, 1993) and with automatic notions of 'progress, civilisation, individual liberty and social mobility' (Street 1987). Literacy is positioned as an independent variable able to produce beneficial 'consequences'. Non-literate people are positioned as deficit. Whereas, as Luke (1993b) rightly insists there are factors other than literacy which determine social mobility; for example, race, gender and socio-economic position. For Street literacy is, in fact, a narrow, culturally specific practice, which involves the distribution of power and authority, maintaining social differentiation. He cautions that the ideological and culturally embedded nature of such practices must be acknowledged and the real significance of the practice of literacy for each social group be considered afresh.

The political nature of literacy should be, but is not always, self-evident. Governments require citizens who will consume their products and follow their laws.

If you cannot read, you cannot be a 'good citizen'. First, if you cannot read forms, regulations, notices, signs etc., you cannot be governed, you cannot be an obedient citizen. Second, you

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1 Street concedes that in a society which depends on literacy practices for its very lifestyle it is extremely difficult to avoid constructing literacy in this way. In fact the survey designed by this researcher also frames literacy in this way, referring as it does to 'teaching literacy', 'learning literacy', 'literacy proficiency', and constructing literacy as an attribute — 'literate'.
cannot be a good consumer, because you are immune to so much advertising and product information. Third, you cannot be a loyal citizen, perhaps the most disturbing allegation, because you will not be sufficiently well read to have imbibed the myths and superstitions of your society. Reading serves the important function of making political and historical myths accessible to students (Postman 1970 in Taylor 1993 p. 143).

In September 1991, the Australian Government released its Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP), the goals of which seek to meet the officially perceived need for all Australians to attain proficiency in spoken and written English. In the ALLP literacy is defined as:

the ability to read and use written information and to write appropriately in a range of contexts. [Literacy] is used to develop knowledge and understanding, to achieve personal growth and to function effectively in our society. Literacy also includes the recognition of numbers and mathematical signs and symbols within text. Literacy involves the integration of speaking, listening and critical thinking with reading and writing (Australian Language and Literacy Policy, 1990).

The question must be posed: 'to read and write what, in whose interests and for whose purposes?'. Teachers need to ask themselves what kind of literacy they are assisting readers to develop. 'Basic literacy' is not enough. This is the kind of literacy Lankshear labels 'improper'—literacy which helps to consolidate embedded structures and patterns of domination and subordination of certain groups' (Boomer, 1989, p. 8). Luke (1993, p. 21) concurs: 'The danger is we will fail to situate, critique, interrogate, and transform these texts, their discourses and their institutional sites'.

The learner is in a double bind: not having literacy systematically excludes him or her from cultural and economic power, yet having literacy, per se, guarantees nothing (Luke, 1993a). This socio-political view of literacy demands a 'critical' perspective on the part of the reader, not merely technical competence. Literacy, for Luke, must be repositioned as social strategy.

These considerations have obvious implications for the types of text which are studied with students, the way in which that text is approached and the effectiveness of that approach to refer students to the wider context of the text and the society.

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2 Not that this is a new situation. In Confucian China to be literate meant belonging to the decision-making class of society. The peasant class, which comprised the mass of the population and which was unable to read or write, was virtually excluded from power.
2.4 Degrees of literacy

With his framework of levels of competency, Wells also seems to provide us with a description of degrees of literacy or degrees of 'criticalness'. Wells (1991) describes four different levels of literacy competence. These are 'performative', 'functional', 'informational' and 'epistemic' levels of literacy.

According to Wells, a person with a performative level of literacy has the technical skills to decode the message in a piece of written text, but not necessarily with understanding. A person with a functional level of literacy can cope with most of the demands of her/his everyday life requiring written language. Functional literacy involves greater understanding of cultural context and a degree of knowledge about the different types of texts necessary to achieve particular purposes. Literacy at an informational level of competence encompasses both performative and functional levels, enabling a reader to obtain information from text. However, although technically competent, the reader's primary concern at this level is usually to amass institutionally sanctioned knowledge in an uncritical fashion. Readers who function at an epistemic level of literacy, a level which encompasses the previous three but also involves an attitude of 'creativity, exploration and critical evaluation' (p. 53), recognise that literacy can change them as people by empowering them to change themselves and their environment. It is this last level of literacy which makes available to readers 'ways of acting upon and transforming knowledge and experience that are, in general, unavailable to those who have never learned to read and write' (p. 53).

For those working in adult literacy, it seems important to examine the quality of the literacy students are developing. Educators may need to consider whether an epistemic or critical perspective cannot also be fostered in a reader with only a functional level of competence. Surely it is the level of comprehension one attains, the stance which that particular level of comprehension enables one to take and to use as the basis for action, that is important. This is the distinction between thinking and unthinking participation, between literacy for liberation and literacy for domestication (Freire, in Berggren, 1975).
Two opposing epistemologies or views about knowledge characterise Western thought. They could be described as the essentialist and the relativist schools of thought. In fact, according to Fish (1989, p. 484) 'the history of Western thought could be written as the history of this quarrel'. One view of knowledge is essentialist in nature, convinced of 'an abiding core of truth'. In this view all human activity is ultimately a search for Truth (capital T). One way in which this Truth is 'conveyed' is through the 'medium' of language. The idea that language 'contains' truths or ideas, is powerfully embedded in the English language through the 'conduit metaphor', so pervasive in idiomatic use (Reddy, 1979, pp. 286-292). For example, in English, we 'put our ideas into words', we say that a text 'contains' or 'holds' information. This view of language as neutral, as merely a conduit or vehicle for ideas, gives rise to the notion of the speaker or writer as sender of messages and the hearer or reader as receiver of them. This is a belief which manifests itself in particular approaches to the teaching of literacy.

The other epistemology is relativist, seeing 'truth' as contingent upon a myriad of factors, true 'at time of being only'. We are embedded always, but it is 'a fractured, fissured, volatile condition' (Fish, 1989, p. 32). According to this relative view there is no universal Truth. All descriptions compete in an attempt to say what happened. Everything becomes a matter of perspective or of construction. Understood from this position, truth is simultaneously perceived from a myriad of perspectives or is being continually constructed in a multiplicity of sites. The greater the number of perspectives brought to bear on an event or idea the closer people are able to get to an appreciation of the 'true' situation, or rather to an understanding that there is in fact no 'true' situation.

According to this view each individual language user expresses a unique viewpoint. The viewpoint adopted shapes the language and the language in turn shapes the idea. There is no separation of language and idea. They are inextricably linked. Each speaker or writer is thus understood to be using language rhetorically—to draw an audience to his or her point of view. This process may be quite overt, as in oratory or political speech
making where the speaker clearly sets out to persuade or to influence people. It may be quite subtle, because unintentional, but its effects can be powerful nevertheless. It may be quite deliberate, yet skilfully disguised, as in the world of advertising.

The persuasive skills of a speaker or writer are highly significant in determining what issues are considered worthy of debate, and in enabling individuals and their interpretive communities to effect change. 'Meanings will always be ... contingent upon the most skilled persuader, that is, some interpretive perspective will always rule by virtue of having won out over its competitors' (Fish, 1989, p.10). From a relativist perspective language is not merely a neutral vehicle. Each speaker or writer adopts a stance, an 'angle of lean', either theirs uniquely, or that of their 'interpretive community'—their discipline, their cultural group or their political or religious affiliations. For a community to effect change, community members must learn to recognise and use rhetorical devices, for their own purposes. For a community to effect the kind of changes it wishes, it must understand how it is being positioned by other interpretive communities.

The notion that all texts are rhetorical produces a quite different approach to language and literacy teaching and has important implications for the strategies to be used in the adult literacy classroom. The rhetorical view of language is the one adopted in this study.

2.6 Two views of language from the relativist position: Systemic Functional Linguistics and critical literacy theory

The Systemic Functional Linguistic approach to language has evolved from a strongly rhetorical tradition. Its originator, Michael Halliday, sees language as a resource for meaning and language users as 'meaning makers' who employ that resource to construct particular meanings in particular ways, for particular purposes. Its emphasis is on the functions of language use. It is a theory of meaning created through language choice which has evolved in socially constructed ways for socially constructed
purposes\textsuperscript{3}. In contrasting his pragmatic approach with that of others more rooted in logic and philosophy Halliday says,

\begin{quote}
The [Systemic Functional] approach leans towards the applied rather than the pure, the rhetorical rather than the logical, the actual rather than the ideal, the functional rather than the formal, the text\textsuperscript{4} rather than the sentence (Halliday, 1985, intro).
\end{quote}

Halliday views language as one of a number of semiotic or 'meaning' systems constructed by human beings. Meaning is said to be 'encoded' in the language, not conveyed by it. For Halliday the extended text and how it functions to achieve its author's purpose, is the focus.

Systemic Functional grammar is primarily concerned with the paradigmatic (choice) features of text rather than the syntagmatic (chain) features of syntax. Language choice, either of a paradigmatic or a syntactic nature, may be made explicitly or implicitly by a writer or speaker, consciously or unconsciously. Halliday shows how, through a process of examining and reflecting upon a writer's or speaker's linguistic choices, a listener or reader is enabled to 'decode' the writer's meanings and intentions, and relate them to the social context in which they arise. This is one of the approaches adopted in this study. Halliday's notion that a text has cohesion and its implication for the teaching of English literacy are discussed later.

Critical literacy, the second of the two approaches to language in the rhetorical tradition which has relevance for this study, comes from the field of critical theory which emphasises the relationship between language and knowledge (ideology). The contemporary, neo-Marxist view asserts that language practices are intimately connected to ideologies and power (Fairclough, 1989). Text becomes a site of class struggle since, through language and text, ideologies are presented as 'common sense', and act to reinforce the status quo. Critical discourse analysis is needed to

\textsuperscript{3}In Australia the application of Halliday's ideas in education contexts has resulted in a particular language teaching approach which gives pre-eminence to mastery of the genres of English. This approach has been criticised as simplistic in its assertion that a facility with the genres of English will lead, per se, to the exercise of power in English-speaking society.

\textsuperscript{4}Contemporary approaches to language and to text analysis have been greatly influenced by the work of the French philosopher, Michel Foucault, particularly his notion of Discourses. It was his contribution which shifted the Discourse of linguistics from preoccupation with the system (\textit{langue}) to instances of the system in use, that is, text or discourse (\textit{parole}).
reveal just how these ideologies are reproduced through language (Fairclough, in Walton, 1993).

With Foucault, a shift occurred in the linguistic debate from ideology to discourse; 'a shift from the ideological workings of power to the discursive workings of power' (Ibid, p. 18, my italics). Foucault posits that the language user is not solely positioned by social class but by other intersecting positionings as well—namely gender, ethnicity and economic circumstance. Above all, Foucault sees power as 'ubiquitously embedded with discursive practices' (p. 19); that is, subtly maintained by means of the various types of communication which take place during everyday social interactions. This distribution of power is greatly facilitated by the established institutions of the society, particularly through the products of such communication, namely oral and written texts.

It is also Foucault's view that 'power is exercised from innumerable points' (Foucault, in Luke, 1993, p. 14). Since power is negotiated as part of all the transactions of a society this implies the need for alertness on the part of every citizen. Power relations must be identified and challenged if necessary in order to shift the balance. Luke interprets Foucault's notion of the embeddedness of power relations in discourse to mean that both the ideological and the discursive basis of text must be examined and challenged by the reader. Exponents of social-critical literacy, like Luke, who wish to go beyond a preoccupation with genre, see as important the capacity, not only to recognise and use different text types, but to 'interrogate' texts, in order to assist students to 'unmask the ideological operation of texts and cultures' (Walton, 1993, p. 44).

2.7 The difference between Discourse and discourse

The term 'discourse' requires explanation. Michel Foucault viewed all human history as a manifestation of conflict and Discourse as a means by which these conflicts are played out. Discourses are like ongoing Conversations criss-crossing a society. These Conversations or Discourses (capital 'D') are 'systematically-organised modes of talking or writing' (Foucault in Kress, 1985). They arise out of social and cultural institutions, transactions and events. All societies have some Discourses in common
even although their experiences of reality and their languages are very
different: there is the Discourse of religion; the Discourse of education; the
Discourse of healing; the Discourse of government. There is the Discourse
of blame; the Discourse of love; the Discourse of play. Larger Discourses
contain many sub-Discourses. As well as having Discourses in common,
every society, or group of societies, will also have Discourses unique to
them; for example, Western societies have a Discourse of sexism and
Aboriginal societies have a Discourse of avoidance relationships. In any
society there are many different Discourses in operation at any one time:
some opposing each other; some supporting each other; some
contradicting each other; some overlapping each other; some quite
different in nature to others (Kress, 1985, pp. 6-7).

Knowing the what, why and how of a Discourse is gleaned from a variety
of sources: 'apparatus, symbolic systems, books, papers and journals,
institutions, habits of bodies, routines of practice, and other people' (Gee,
1993, p. 14). Participation in a Discourse necessitates a particular way of
'knowing'; for example, 'knowing' scientifically, 'knowing' aesthetically,
'knowing' pedagogically. Each way of knowing is encoded in the language
of the Discourse, not merely transmitted by it (Reddy, 1979; Rumelhart,
1980; and F. Christie, 1990). A particular use of language is integral to that
knowing. This can involve the use of a particular terminology, the use of
particular metaphors, and the use of ordinary, everyday terms in a
particular way.

According to this view, each member of a society develops a unique
Discourse (or discursive) history. This Discourse 'profile' is a synthesis of
the different Discourses in which an individual has engaged in his/her
lifetime, whether by virtue of birth, of necessity or of choice. Successful
participation in a Discourse or Discourses is literacy of the highest order.
However, Discourses also limit what is possible. They position their
individual subjects in particular ways, constraining their ability to 'know'
in other ways.

The need to communicate between Discourses, whether from individual
to individual or group to group or institution to institution produces texts.
For Kress (1985) texts are always the sites of attempts to resolve particular
problems. They are constructed in and by difference. 'Where there is no
difference no text comes into being' (p. 12). It might simply be the need of an author to resolve the tensions between her or his own Discourse history and other Discourses. To achieve a truly epistemic level of comprehension the reader must be aware of this dimension of texts. The reader must become sensitive to an author's choice of language in order to detect the Discourses which have brought the text into being, the Discourses which are present (or absent) from the text, the Discourses which are in contention throughout the text and the Discourses which hold the power in the text. For the reader whose language, gender, class or Discourse history is other than mainstream, this is a much more problematic task.

In many instances the terms 'discourse' and 'text' are used interchangeably although they are not, strictly speaking, the same. Discourses (small 'd') are examples of those systematically organised ways of communicating, in progress—rather like a 'snatch' of an ongoing conversation. Text is defined by Halliday (1976, introduction) as any unit of language in use (italics mine). The notion of Discourse is not present.

For Kress, and for the purposes of this study, texts are considered the material outcomes of discourse, not simply of language. In Systemic Functional Linguistics the grammar to 'read' the ideological basis of the text is not provided. Discourse theory provides this.

2.8 A third approach: Proposition and Schema theories

Another group of linguists in the field of discourse analysis or comprehension, comes from a background in the disciplines of philosophy, philosophical logic, cognitive psychology and artificial intelligence (van Dijk, 1976). Their interest is in how complex experiences of the world are stored in memory and retrieved for the purpose of understanding text. Not all of the actual experience of a discourse can be inscribed—only the essential aspects—therefore the tension for the writer of any text (and for any reader who tries to comprehend it) lies in the fact that a non-linear 'frame' or 'episode' (van Dijk, 1987) has to be communicated within the linear structure of a text. This is where the 'perlocutionary' act of the reader comes in; that is, 'that aspect of a reader's
response that escapes detailed description: it is invited, stimulated, or opened up by the text, but not closely controlled by it' (Phelps, 1988, p. 150). Thematic processing therefore depends upon the making of inferences by the reader. Inferencing requires making connections between units of information in the text and one's knowledge and experience of the world beyond the text.

Schema Theory stresses the importance of prior knowledge of the ideational context in assisting the reader to understand the macro and micro-propositions in a text (Frederiksen, 1977). Drawing upon work done in the field of artificial intelligence, this theory proposes the existence of cognitive structures in the mind of the reader. These 'frames' (Minsky, 1975), 'schemata' (Rumelhart and Ortony, 1977) or 'propositional schemata' (van Dijk and Kintsch, 1983) are created through participation in social and cultural experiences of all kinds. They form a repertoire of concepts or possible scenarios and are stored in cognitive structures of various kinds. Encoded in each knowledge structure is the knowledge of how and in what contexts that knowledge is to be used, together with links (cross referencing) to networks of interrelated concepts. This encoded knowledge—whether in the form of frames or schema, together with its networks of related concepts—is instantiated, for purposes of discourse comprehension, by particular textual references. Its instantiation, or activation, provides the reader with an ideational scaffold from which to confirm existing knowledge or around which to integrate new knowledge with old.

The concern with context for others is primarily semantic or cognitive, rather than social or ideological. From their psychological viewpoint, reading is the construction of propositional schema (van Dijk and Kintsch, 1983). Propositions are constructed

when we make socially and culturally relevant categorical distinctions in the continuous flow of pure reality: '... [W]e form concepts which represent these discrete distinctions in things and properties of the world and we have learned to couple these with natural language expressions. ... This holds 'not only for things but also for the processes, events, actions and states in which such things and properties participate ...' (van Dijk and Kintsch, 1983, p. 127).

The definition of a proposition has been the subject of much discussion. Huttar (1973) draws a distinction between non-propositions and propositions—and their realisation in words and phrases as opposed to clauses and sentences. He describes words as labelling 'things' or entities to
talk about. The talk about the 'thing' or the entity is a proposition. Propositions are encoded in clauses or sentences or, expressed linguistically, clauses and sentences express propositions. Huttar reserves the term 'clause' for a single proposition, and the term 'sentence' for a complex of propositions. Huttar also includes the phrase at the level of labelling. This is because items to be talked about (and this category includes not only objects but events, states, attributes and relations) often require to be labelled by a combination of words; that is, by a phrase. This researcher has adopted Huttar's definition in the propositional analysis in Appendix 11.

For these linguists, skilled discourse processing demands the interaction of propositional perception (the recognition of ideational units of meaning in the text) with thematic integration (working out the relationships between these propositions and identifying which are more important and which less important in the overall scheme of the text) (Townsend et al., 1987). The need to identify how this is accomplished by a successful reader gave rise to the Theory of Macrostructures. This theory posits the existence of global semantic units (macrostructures) in a text. (The title is the most global macrostructure of any text.) The macrostructure of a piece of discourse is a hierarchical structure, consisting of several levels of proposition. The rules for processing the macrostructures in the text are a form of reduction: delete propositions or replace sequences of propositions by a single (macro) proposition (Ibid, p. 190). The reader processes 'proposition sequences' at a 'lower' level by integrating them with proposition sequences at a 'higher' level. In this way the global meaning of an episode or a whole discourse can be deduced from the local (clause or sentence) meanings of the discourse. The reverse is also true.

Comprehension is seen by these linguists as a strategic activity in which the task of the reader is to convert each semantic unit or micro-structure into a more inclusive macrostructure until the most global semantic macro-structure of the text has been reached (macro-processing). This process constantly involves the reader in organising information through generalising and abstracting, so that pressure on memory is reduced. Once

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5 Describing an event (an action) may involve a single word; 'announced', or a phrase, such as, 'is announcing', 'started to announce', 'would have been announcing'.

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the reader has attained a 'mountain top' view of the text she or he can revisit any micro-structures which caused difficulty, in the light of greater contextual information.

2.9 An overview of the three approaches, their relationship to each other, and their relevance for this study

Systemic Functional theory, Discourse theory and the closely related Critical theory all come from a rhetorical view of language, understanding 'truth' as socially and linguistically constructed and all text as revealing the particular 'angle of lean' of the speaker or writer.

From a Systemic Linguistic perspective, the study of a text involves the reader in analysing language choice in order to identify the function and purpose of the text and the writer, and leads us into the social context in which it is embedded.

From a critical literacy perspective, the study of a text involves the above but also involves critiquing the text; deciding how the reader, is being situated by the text—socially, culturally, racially, economically, politically—thus transforming his or her position and making possible the reconstruction of himself or herself as subject.

Proposition Theory comes from a tradition 'more rooted in logic and philosophy' than Systemic Linguistics (Halliday, 1985) having a concern for the 'ideal' rather than the 'actual' (Ibid). Proposition Theory posits a text as a series of idea units (propositions) related to each other in various ways, the strategic task of the reader being to establish coherence between these propositions.

The theory of Discourses, which understands texts as the products of language transactions and interactions which occur in the course of operating within a Discourse or Discourses, provides a satisfying contextual framework in which the other approaches, even though they spring from different orientations, can be accommodated. Situating text as 'discourse' enables the reader to examine language choice, to consider propositions, to take up a critical position in relation to the text but to
have that critical position informed by an awareness of the power relationships between the Discourses which feature in the text.

It is this researcher's belief that adopting such a range of approaches to the study of a text greatly increases the possibility of comprehension and socio-cultural understandings, especially in a cross-cultural context. This study therefore proposes the adoption of aspects of all three perspectives in the analysis of discourse.

2.10 Some socio-political issues involved in the development of literacy in cross-cultural settings

It is hardly surprising that, because of its socio-political and cultural nature, the teaching of literacy is problematic in cross-cultural settings. Citing the report *Bala Bala: Some Literacy and Educational Perceptions of Three Aboriginal Communities* as evidence, Fesl (1983) maintains that the long list of abandoned literacy programs is evidence that Aboriginal people have rejected English literacy per se. She draws the conclusion that, by rejecting literacy, Aboriginal people were continuing to resist the assimilationist intentions of literacy programs, the attempt 'to make Aborigines useful tools of the white economy'. These were programs which had been imposed on them rather than devised in response to their own expressed needs and interests. According to Fesl, in rejecting such English literacy programs Aboriginal people were affirming the sufficiency of their oral traditions.

Referring to students in a community school in Arnhem Land, M. Christie (1989), like Fesl, lists a range of strategies for teaching literacy which have come and gone over a decade, with little effect on the literacy levels of students. He maintains that what is happening is that 'in order to preserve their Aboriginal identity from the intrusion of individualistic European teaching methods, Aboriginal children everywhere have been actively resistant to learning to read and write' (p. 28, my italics). With this comment Christie is implicating the pedagogy of non-Aboriginal educators as a significant factor in the low literacy levels of students.
Group cohesiveness is synonymous with Aboriginality and a focus on the individual is strongly resisted.

This resistance may or may not be linked to the ideas of Marshall McLuhan (1967) and Walter Ong (1982, 1988) who maintain that for the individual who becomes steeped in the practices of literacy a shift in consciousness occurs. Reading and writing are usually solitary practices which remove the practitioner of literacy from the group. Referring to 'the book', McLuhan says, 'it isolated the reader in silence and helped create the Western "I"' (1967, p. 136).

However the Aboriginal Australian students, in this study, are not locked in a time warp. While they may continue to operate traditionally in many aspects of their lives, they are contemporary Australians, dealing with contemporary issues, travelling from place to place, in and out of urban culture, and in and out of the domain of English literacy. Whether individuals can move as easily between operating in an oral society and operating in a literate society, between consciousnesses as it were, without being changed forever by the move from one to another, has not yet been explored. What is clear is that print literacy is problematic for people from an oral tradition.

Relational issues are considered critical by Scollon and Scollon (1982). They found that in the North Athabaskan Indian oral tradition, as in the Aboriginal Australian tradition, respect for the autonomy of others is paramount. Since the imposition of one person's way of making sense upon another's is considered a form of violation, it is to be avoided. Therefore what Scollon and Scollon describe as 'nonfocused' activities are preferred above 'focused' activities. However it is, above all, the right to negotiate which of the two will characterise the interaction, which is important. Scollon and Scollon discuss the situation which arises when focused and nonfocused styles of interaction meet and no such negotiation takes place.

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6Paradoxically, the autonomy of the individual, within the clearly defined parameters of the kinship system, is highly valued.

7Focused and non-focused activities are to be seen on a continuum. Towards the focused end are those activities that are more public and formal, have larger numbers of participants, are usually bound by time constraints, permit little or no negotiation between participants. Towards the nonfocused end are those activities characterised by their informal nature, a more intimate number of participants, fewer time constraints and more 'mutual sense making' (Scollon & Scollon, 1982 p. 183).

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Our view of focusing is that any two individuals may begin an interaction with any assumptions. As long as they agree on how sense is going to be made, whether focused or nonfocused, the interaction will proceed relatively smoothly. If there is a difference in assumptions, if one sees the situation as more focused than the other by some noticeable degree, then there is little question that the interaction will move toward focusing, unilateral sense being made by the focusing participant. Because that participant is not negotiating, the nonfocusing participant has no choice but to accept the focusing of the other or leave the situation. Joint or mutual sense making must be mutually accomplished. It is the first item to be negotiated (Scollon and Scollon, 1984, p. 184, my italics).

People who have been involved in Aboriginal education for any length of time will no doubt recognise themselves as having been, at least once, in a situation like that described above. The notion of focussed and nonfocussed interactions and the need to negotiate with students which will predominate in a given situation, seem to have considerable relevance for educators in non-urban contexts of the Northern Territory.

Scollon and Scollon describe school as normally 'a highly focusing environment' (1984, p. 184), an environment in which teachers decide upon and impose tasks on students without (genuine) negotiation. When looking for possible causes of reading difficulty they have de-emphasised the difference between oral and literate traditions, concentrating more on the way in which reading, as an activity, is treated; that is, as focused or non-focused. When reading is treated as a focused activity, it becomes a psychological guessing game—only the author's meaning is acceptable. The world view and the life experience of the reader are not valued except inasmuch as they help students confirm the author's meaning. 'What is rejected is a negotiated making of sense, [a] building of new sense out of the materials provided by the author' (p. 187).

Scollon and Scollon argue for a multiplicity of readings. Like M. Christie et al., they are also arguing for a pedagogy which allows for negotiation and respect other ways of knowing.

2.11 Ganma Theory

Negotiation and reciprocity are the central tenets of a theory of 'two-way' education which is currently being developed in the Northern Territory. In north-east Arnhem Land Yolngu educators perceive that 'in teaching...
and learning there is always a dynamic interaction of knowledge traditions' (Mununggirritj, 1989). This perception is based on the lived experience of each Yolngu person who is initiated from birth into either one or other of the two moieties or knowledge traditions which characterise Yolngu society.

North east Arnhem was created by proto-human Yolngu ancestors of two distinct moieties as they sang and talked their way across the land, creating the form of the land and the waters, the people, wildlife, languages, totems, and sacred designs and ceremonies. The Yirritja moiety ancestors created the Yirritja world—land, people, songs etc—the Dhuwa moiety ancestors created the Dhuwa world. Dhuwa and Yirritja land, people, songs, totems etc are quite distinct, existing side by side, each utterly dependent on the other to survive (M. Christie, 1992, p. 2).

In such a system of social organisation, knowledge must be constantly negotiated to facilitate the daily business of the community.

This process of making knowledge of one world available in another is familiar practice for us. Our world exists in two parts: the Dhuwa and the Yirritja. Dhuwa rom (knowledge of Dhuwa clans) is made available to Yirritja clans for their use and vice versa’ (Mununggirritj, 1989, p. 14).

These Yolngu (Yirritja) educators use a natural phenomenon, a particular location in northeast Arnhem at which two streams of water meet—one from the sea and the other from the land—as a way of thinking about the kind of education needed to develop a strong Yolngu person in contemporary Australia. The place where two such streams meet is the source of abundant new life. In the actual physical location the two streams, the salt water from the sea and the fresh water from the land, ‘mutually engulf’ each other, creating at their interface a line of foam. Metaphorically the foam represents the ‘interface between the current of Yolngu life and the current of Balanda life’ (Marika, Ngurruwuthun, and White, 1989, p. 14). For these educators the coming together of the Yolngu and Balanda ways of knowing has the potential to be immensely enriching for students. However, for them, the teaching and learning of these different ways of knowing must be characterised by mutuality and reciprocity, not the imposition of one on another. This approach, which has come to be known as Ganma Theory, arises from the Yirritja knowledge tradition.

In the Dhuwa tradition of knowledge, the same understanding of the dynamic nature of the teaching/learning process is expressed somewhat

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9Balanda is the Yolngu term for non-Aboriginal people.
differently. The emphasis here is upon the balance of energies and the ebb and flow between them.

Fresh water from the land, bubbling up in fresh water springs to make waterholes, and salt water from the sea are interacting with each other, with the energy of the tide and the energy of the bubbling spring. When the tide is high the water rises to its full. When the tide goes out the water reduces its capacity. In the same way Milngurr ebbs and flows (Munungmurra, 1989).

Continuing the education metaphor, this event in the natural world suggests the need to balance the energies involved in the teaching learning interaction—the alternating of 'leadership' backwards and forwards between equal forces, not a one-way action. In this way both traditional knowledge systems complement each other, bringing different perspectives which mutually expand and enrich the theory.

Whether the different knowledge systems are Dhuwa and Yirritja, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, or the teacher's and the student's, the Yolngu approach stresses the give and take, the sharing with respect and the balancing of power which must characterise the process of teaching and learning. Yolngu offer these metaphors as a useful basis on which to theorise and develop an education process which provides for all participants to share the particular knowledge they have for their mutual benefit and which acknowledges the need to negotiate, not impose meaning.

In the cross-cultural education context the implication for educators from both Yolngu and Balanda traditions is that they must be prepared to 'dig deep' into their own cultural knowledge and share it (Wunungmurra et al., 1988). However it is recognised that this is not an easy process and demands a particular kind of educator. 'It is only self-aware, cross-cultural teachers who could conceivably engage in this active, self-researching teaching in a truly Yolngu school' (Marika et al., 1989, p. 10).

Ganma theory can usefully inform adult education, particularly in cross-cultural contexts.
2.12 An overview of some of the issues surrounding the introduction of literacy in cross-cultural settings.

It would appear that Aboriginal people have been active in expressing their responses to the introduction of literacy for some time. 'Failure' is seen as resistance by both Fesl and Christie, resistance to the political purpose of governments in the case of Fesl and resistance to individualistic teaching methods which threaten to destroy group cohesiveness and identity in the case of Christie. (This may or may not be linked to the theories of McLuhan and Ong which suggest that the practice of literacy changes human beings, isolating them from each other and making them "I" conscious.)

Scollon and Scollon also attribute blame for students' literacy difficulties on teaching methods which are a kind of violence, allowing for little meaningful negotiation and jeopardising the relationship between teacher and student. Garuma theory, which has emerged from Aboriginal people themselves, seems to provide the theoretical basis for the development of a better way.

2.13 Some of the potential difficulties for readers of English texts

Reading is a strategic act (van Dijk, 1976). It involves the skilful management and deployment of knowledge resources. These resources include a knowledge of how the system of print operates, a knowledge of the grammar system of the language in which the text is written, and a knowledge of how a writer weaves his or her meanings into a text. The successful reader understands that he or she must draw upon his or her knowledge of the world and bring it to the text. The successful reader looks for the ways in which a writer is signalling his or her own attitudes to what is being discussed. It is clear that many students have not yet learned these strategies. Let us examine some of the skills and understandings they must develop.

At a most basic level, the reader must have an understanding of the symbolic and codified nature of print and develop the skill of decoding it. This is certainly the major task of the beginning reader. Readers must have sufficient practice with print to progress from accuracy to
automaticity (Samuels, 1987, p. 299). This is difficult to provide where students' courses are densely packed and private reading is not a normal practice.

Because a written text is crafted over a longer period of time than a spoken one, it has usually gone through a considerable period of refinement, of editing, by its author. The more formal the text, the more this is likely to be the case. Over many drafts, a text will have been structured into more and more economic and meaning-dense units of language. The reader must systematically 'unpack' the layers of meaning—a highly complex task. Of course, for readers, the pressure to process written text is less immediate than it is for spoken text. There is more time at their disposal to access a writer's meaning. They have the opportunity to move forwards and backwards through the text to confirm and disconfirm possible readings, and to construct the whole meaning of the text, in a highly reflexive manner (Horowitz and Samuels, 1987, p. 18). However, this necessitates using a particular kind of cognitive behaviour, unfamiliar to a reader whose proficiency is in the oral mode. It is quite possible that some students do not yet have a full enough understanding of the nature of the 'decoding' process to comprehend even simple written English texts.

According to M. Christie the linear nature of written text and its unidirectionality is extremely limiting and poses problems for readers from different traditions. He maintains that in a literate society

> knowledge and ideas can be recorded as objects and stored. Later they can be read or viewed and they will still mean the same. The ideas are arranged like objects in a particular order, starting from 'the beginning' and linking through to 'the end'...There can be no branches, or backwards connections or parallel levels of action in written material. It has to be unidimensional, because your eyes must follow the single line of the text.

(M. Christie, 1989, p. 28).

However the computer is rapidly adding another dimension to our concept of print and how it is to be read. Hypertext systems, for example, allow for 'three dimensional navigation through a body of data' (Carlson, 1989, p. 64). Originally thought of as 'non-sequential writing' (Nelson, 1988, in Rubens, 1989, p. 17), hypertext systems 'give readers (often total) control to move through a complex space of data points, exploring those items that tweak their interest, following branches as whim dictates' (Jaynes, 1989, p. 159). Information is embedded in an associative web
structure allowing deep exploration, so that ‘the only limit to successive branchings is the time and patience of the information developer and programmer’ (Herrstrom and Massey, 1989, p. 50). With hypertext it is possible for users (readers) to move virtually from anywhere to anywhere by association. What the reader instantiates is an immediate juxtaposition of related information. S/he can not only move ‘directionally “up” and “down” levels of detail but ... can also move to any intersection of the hierarchy, skipping levels or jumping across from one level to another’ (Ibid, p. 52). Clearly, with the advent of computer technology, the ‘linear’ characteristic of print is being transformed.

However, even with conventional written text, much of the branching, backwards connecting and parallel levels of action Christie refers to above, actually takes place in the mind of a successful reader. For those unaccustomed to the act of reading print and the active meaning-making it requires, this is not obvious. It is therefore extremely important to make the mental behaviour of the reader explicit to such students.

People who learn to use English are required to ‘experience’ the world in a certain way. English speakers have evolved particular meanings about the world around them, firstly because of their experience of the environment in which they found themselves and secondly because of their response to that experience. As a society they have evolved a language which expresses and shapes these meanings in a particular way10. Other languages are similarly unique (Whorf, 1956). They have developed in response to different environments, to express different experiences and to make different meanings. The more foreign to the learner that view of the world is, the more difficult it will be to make the shift of orientation.

According to Proposition Theory (Kintsch and van Dijk, 1983) all texts encode ‘propositions’ or idea units, for example, the idea of business or what is meant by the tourism industry or the location to be envisaged by in Nitmiluk National Park11. Depending upon the meanings she or he wishes to make, an author selects particular propositions, and relates them to each other in a particular way. Propositions are culturally constructed.

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10 See M. Christie (1992) for a thought provoking account of the differences, and the similarities, in the conceptualising of ‘reality’ between English and an Aboriginal language from northeast Arnhemland

11 These examples are taken from the text educators were required to analyse as part of this research project.
particular configuration of ideas may have become incorporated into general use, for example, tourism and industry. To comprehend the text the reader must first of all recognise the propositions, and then work out the relationship between them. This the reader must do both by drawing upon grammatical knowledge and upon knowledge of the cultural context of the text. For readers whose concepts and culture are very different from the writer's, this can be a difficult task.

Steffensen (1981) asserts that often the breakdown in relationships at the linguistic level reflects a breakdown in the understanding of the real world relationships being expressed. In her study, Indian and American readers read two texts of similar difficulty. Both described a wedding situation—one set in an Indian context the other set in an Anglo-American one. When their comprehension of both texts was checked, the Indian readers had done better on the Indian text and the American readers on the American text. Steffensen concludes:

> What appears to be a language problem ... may in fact be a problem of background knowledge. In such a case teaching them facts about American customs would probably improve their verbal production more than language drills on the use of conjunctions would (Steffensen, 1981, p. 20).

Smith and Elkins (1992) concur that one of the basic conditions of literacy is contextualisation, that the comprehension process is obstructed 'unless or until a language user imposes context. To fail to contextualise is to fail to understand' (Harste, Woodward and Burke, 1984, in Smith and Elkins, p. 249).

In order that the reader may be assisted to construct a coherent thread of meaning from the text consistent with that intended by the writer, the text must be made as cohesive as possible. In English this is done in particular ways. For example, in order to anchor her or his ideas in 'real' space and time a writer provides reference points for the reader. The reader then uses these spatial and temporal references in the text in order to put herself or himself on the same temporal and spatial plane as the writer—to stand in, or at least beside, the writer's place.

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12 The notion that text has cohesion has been well explored by Halliday and Hasan (1976). This concept is discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.
In written text readers must continually keep track of who or what is being referred to. Another instance of cohesion is when a person, a concept, an event or an object in the text is referred to by name initially, but subsequently through the use of substitutes. The substituted term may be either a pronominal item, such as 'he', 'she', 'it', 'they', 'him', 'her', 'them', or another semantically associated vocabulary item (collocation). In some instances words are omitted but are expected to be retrieved by the reader (ellipsis). In others sentences are 'unfinished' (elision) and readers are expected to 'infer' the remainder. Competent readers become aware of these cohesive devices and learn to use them strategically.

Readers must learn to detect the position or angle of the author. In the face-to-face oral mode, the listener is usually much more aware of this than is the reader of a text. That is, the listener can more easily 'read' the particular bias or agenda of the speaker and the assumptions she or he is making. This will usually be because of a range of factors: the nature of the context in which they are communicating; the formality of the occasion; the authority of the speaker to speak; the relationship of the listener to the speaker; the degree of their shared experience and background; their gender, social status, economic situation, political views and personalities; and paralinguistic clues such as accent, pitch, tone and gesture. In the written mode this bias is much more difficult to detect. It is much easier for a reader to imagine that this bias does not in fact exist, that the text is in some way neutral. In fact the compact and embedded nature of English written text conceals its argumentative intent. For example, a writer has the facility in English to place some ideas at a superordinate level, and others at a subordinate level. Systemic linguists term this 'hypotaxis'.

The hypotactical construction is the argumentative construction par excellence. Auerbach considers it to be characteristic of Greco-Roman literature in contradistinction to the paratactic [list-like] construction favored in Hebrew culture. Hypotaxis creates frameworks, constitutes the adoption of a position. It controls the reader, forces him to see particular relationships, restricts the interpretations he may consider, and takes its inspiration from well-constructed legal reasoning. Parataxis leaves greater freedom and does not appear to wish to impose a particular viewpoint (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969 in Horowitz, 1987).

Readers, particularly those readers who come from a linguistic tradition of parataxis, need to be alerted to the rhetorical, or partisan nature of written

\[13\] The implication for educators is surely that texts for students to study should be carefully selected for evidence of strong cohesion as well as for considerations of topic and perspective.
text and taught to read the cues which reveal the writer’s argument or stance and how they themselves are being positioned to think.

2.14 The particular nature of written English discourse

While the complexity of speech lies in its grammatical structure, written language, with a simpler syntactic structure, is made complex by its much greater lexical density (Halliday, 1987). This greater lexical density or compactness of ideas is possible because of the increased time writers have to weave their thoughts into more and more succinct expressions of meaning. In English this process is greatly assisted by the key use of nominalisation or what Halliday terms ‘grammatical metaphor’. Martin (1990) describes this tendency in English as the tendency to ‘thingify’, that is to objectify, to name and therefore to ‘make real’ concepts which have developed as the result of a particular socio-cultural response to the world. In the west the concept of discrimination according to gender—sexism—is now named. This is not so in other societies. In certain societies the gender of a cousin, whether male or female, is differentiated by name, yet in English-speaking cultures this is not done (Harris, 1979). Of course this does not mean that the concept for either of these examples is lacking, merely that it has not deemed significant enough to be named.

Burke (in Phelps, 1988, p. 131) maintains that any nomenclature, whether deliberately chosen or spontaneous, acts as a ‘terministic screen’ through which reality is selectively perceived. It does this, firstly, ‘by redirecting our attention into certain channels rather than others’ and secondly, ‘by defining the range of what is possible and what is problematic’ (Ibid, p. 132). Once identified and ‘naturalised’ these concepts become ‘real’, their paradigmatic nature rendered invisible14 to the native speaker. Some of these concepts, while expressed by a single word, may actually consist of a network of interrelated concepts; for example, the word ‘business’.

Nominalisation in English is an important resource for organising information (Halliday, 1987). It enables complex abstract concepts to be

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14Initially the metaphorical nature of an expression is obvious. However, over time the connection with the literal source of the metaphor is no longer perceived. The metaphors become ‘faded’ (Birrer, 1992), ‘dead’ or ‘frozen’ (Ravelli, 1988). In fact ‘much of the history of every language is a history of demetaphorizing’ (Halliday, 1985).
manipulated and related to each other as objects or participants in the text, in an extremely economical way. It is particularly well suited to argument and discussion. However, this way of objectifying concepts and packing them into complex units of meaning—for example the phrase 'the NT economy's tourist industry'\textsuperscript{15}—and further, attributing to them the power to 'act' or 'possess' or 'be', must present great difficulty to readers whose society has not named these concepts or whose language has other ways of expressing complexity and is not so concerned with argument or debate.

The logic or rhetorical organisation of an English text is realised through its grammar by means of the connectives which signal the relationships between propositions. These signalling words help shape the discourse and give it cohesion:

> readers and listeners use cues such as if, because, after, or although as signals to integrate propositions with context and expectations. For example, if is a signal to integrate the proposition immediately into a causal organization of text, but although is a signal to postpone integration (Townsend, Carrithers, and Bevers, 1987, p. 222).

These particular 'logical' relations have become conventionalized over time, alongside socio-cultural perceptions of the relationships which 'exist' in the 'real world'. In the Western tradition there is a close relationship between grammatical theory and logical theory (Lyons, 1977). Other cultures have devised other linguistic means of expressing these relationships or may have developed different perceptions of relatedness and causality in the 'real world'. In an English text the connective words or phrases which would make clear the logical relationships intended by the writer are often omitted and the reader is expected to infer this relationship simply from the juxtaposition of the two idea units. The logic of English texts in general and of individual texts in particular, needs to be made explicit to non-native speakers of a language.

2.15 Deixis (positioning) in the English language

The following discussion has been compiled with close reference to work in this area by Lyons (1976) and Butler (1988).

\textsuperscript{15}This phrase appears in the text analysed later in Chapter 5.
The greater the spatiotemporal separation of the participants in an act of communication, for example, speaker and hearers or writer and readers, the greater the requirement for deixis to establish reference points.

In man's world—the world as man sees it and describes it in everyday language—he is, in the most literal sense, the measure of all things. Anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism are woven into the very fabric of his language; it reflects his biological make up, his natural terrestrial habitat, his mode of locomotion, and even the shape and properties of his body (Lyons, 1976, p. 690).

The name given to those linguistic items which writers and speakers use to fix the people, objects, events, processes or activities they are talking about or referring to, as precisely as possible in time and space for their audience, is 'deixis', from the Greek word meaning 'pointing' or 'indicating'. This notion probably refers to a time when communication was only possible in face-to-face situations and the speaker supported his/her speech with gesture and pointing.

In any text, information about, for example, the roles of different participants, their relationships and their location in time and space, must be established to assist the reader. These are 'grammaticalised' or realised in the text. The identity of text participants, including the speaker or writer, is expressed through the use of personal 'first' person and 'second' person pronouns such as 'I', 'me', 'my' and the listener or reader as 'you', 'your', 'yours', i.e., words which give an indication of who is being talked about or referred to. Others or 'third persons' when not being referred to by name, are alluded to by means of the pronouns 'he', 'she' and 'it'. The use of 'demonstrative' pronouns such as 'this', 'that', 'these', 'those' and often the simple use of 'the' give an indication of which particular person or object or place or time is being talked about or referred to.

The use of pronouns in written English is extensive. This is for reasons of economy and because of the much greater opportunity a reader has, to refer back in the text. However this task of tracing back the reference to its original source would clearly have to be demonstrated and made explicit to Aboriginal readers. This is a feature of English text which must be actively taught.

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16 For an indepth description of deixis see 'Deixis, space and time', in Lyons, J. (1977, pp. 636-724)
Location or position is located by means of coordinates or dimensions. These dimensions are up/down on the vertical plane, and front/back on the horizontal plane. Where these coordinates or dimensions intersect, the zero point is identified. The upwards/downwards coordinate is the primary dimension for establishing position. As (Lyons, 1976, p. 690) explains it, human beings, by virtue of their uprightness, experience verticality as 'physically and psychologically the most salient of the spatial directions'. Upwards and downwards directionality is therefore privileged, and is strongly foregrounded in deixis. This is because human beings have their principal organs of perception directed towards the region in front of them. They normally move in that same direction and interact with other human beings, front to front, or face to face (Lyons, 1976). Human bodies are asymmetrical in this regard, however, since they do not have two 'fronts' but rather a 'front' and a 'back'. Front and back or forward and backward directionality is the second coordinate for establishing position.

In English, the location of people or events or objects is grammaticalised through the use of prepositions or prepositional phrases; for example, 'at', 'into', 'in', 'on the rock', 'in the National Park'. Prepositions such as 'from', 'through', 'up' and the extended phrases developed from them 'from the tree', 'through the Gorge', 'up the cliff', give an indication of their spatial extension.

Temporal reference or time is grammaticalised, in English, in the tense system. Tense is commonly, though not universally, realised in the verb or verbal groups of a language; for example, 'is holding', 'announced', 'will be shocked'. Adverbs and adverbial phrases also perform a deictic function, for example, 'now', 'then', 'recently' 'last night', 'at any time'; these give an indication of the time of an occurrence. It is the reader's task to utilise such clues to work out the relationship between the situation being described, and the zero point of utterance (that point in time which is the 'now' the speaker or writer is conceptualising). It is only if the writer identifies a particular point of time clearly, for example, 'on 4th May, 1993', that is in accordance with some publicly agreed frame of reference, in this case the Gregorian calendar, that the need to provide deixis is eliminated.
The tense system of English is based on the distinction between 'past' and 'non-past'. It is interesting to note that, as children, first-language speakers of English are only able to use calendar and clock time after they have mastered the use of tense, that is after they have learned to make the (socially constructed) distinction between past and not past. Not all languages however have tense. That is they 'do not obligatorily relate the time of the situation to the time of utterance by any systematic variation in the structure of the sentence' (Ibid, p. 679). The time, whether past present or future, is conveyed through the context. Temporal deixis may therefore be an aspect of English text that Aboriginal students will need assistance in decoding.

Although we have discussed only the deixis of person, space and time in detail, Butler (1988) lists five types of deixis in English: person deixis, place deixis, time deixis, discourse deixis—a reference which indicates another part of the same text—and social deixis—a reference which indicates the relationship between text participants, for example, forms of address. The last is normally referred to as 'tenor' in Systemic Linguistics.

2.16 Cohesion and coherence

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Halliday (1985) the unifying or cohering property of any piece of discourse is 'texture'. To create texture, a writer, writing in English, must employ particular text-forming relations. These relations create the cohesion or 'glue' which holds the text together (in a meaning sense).

Cohesion has to do with the manner in which a discourse relates what is being said in a current sentence to knowledge which is pre-supposed, either within the text (anaphoric or cataphoric reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction) or outside the text (exophoric reference) (Halliday and Hasan, 1976).

Cohesion is the manner in which what is being said, is related to previously stated (or anticipated) information within or beyond the text. The cohesiveness of a text depends upon: the treatment of the topic (how new and significant information is presented); the particular language structures selected by the author which indicate how the ideas in the text are related (the rhetorical features of a text); and the intratextual references which cue the reader as to the way in which one word or phrase is being
related to another word or phrase. Deixis (discussed previously) is a feature of cohesion.

For Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 23) 'texture is a matter of degree'. All texts display cohesion to a greater or lesser extent. Some texts display strong cohesion, others weak cohesion (Gutwinski, 1976; Freebody and Anderson, 1983). Kantor (1978), links low cohesiveness with 'inconsiderateness' on the part of the writer. This seems to imply a lack of care, some sort of unmet obligation on the part of the writer—the existence of an unwritten agreement or contract between writer and reader which has been dishonoured. The implication is that high cohesiveness is more helpful to the reader. Pearson (in Freebody, and Anderson, 1983) demonstrates that strong cohesion does indeed greatly assist readers in at least one major respect—by enabling them to maintain continuity of reference.

However, texture is created by more than clear textual interplay (cohesion). It involves 'some degree of coherence in the actual meanings expressed' (Halliday, 1976, p. 23, italics mine). Coherence is difficult to define and there appears to be some confusion over the term17. Halliday seems to be suggesting that coherence, at least in part, is the responsibility of the writer; that coherence is created (or not created) for the reader through the writer's ability (or inability) to make a 'TOTAL (sic) selection from the semantic resources of the language' (p. 23)18.

For theorists of discourse comprehension however, coherence is something the reader establishes through the strategic use of textual and extratextual cues.

It may be useful to think of coherence as something the reader establishes—or hopes to establish—in the process of reading connected discourse; in this respect, coherence may be viewed as the cognitive correlate of cohesion (Moe and Irwin, 1986).

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17 According to Gutwinski (1973) 'coherent' is sometimes used to describe texts without 'gaps in thought', particularly at paragraph level. For this reason Gutwinski carefully avoids its use as 'gaps in thought are not open to linguistic investigation' (p. 27).

18 Coherence is not an orderly phenomenon and so we must find ways to deal with it. Wittgenstein (in Shotter, p. 145) suggests that we do this through 'perspicuous representations'—a way of making sense of things that we are unable to do on our own, a way that relies upon people 'seeing things in the same way as each other by the use of metaphors'. Judging whether a text hangs together (coheres) is a task usually given to proficient language users for their agreement. Coherence seems to be recognisable but not necessarily able to be proven. Rather, invisible connections are 'sensed' through metaphor by those from the cultural 'in' group (Shotter, 1993).
Such theorists are primarily concerned to ascertain exactly how the reader utilises the cohesive features of a text in order to make inferences and generate coherence.

It seems to this researcher that both writer and reader, somewhat mysteriously, are involved in establishing coherence and that both views can usefully contribute to our understanding of the comprehension process.

2.17 The information structure of English texts

One of the semantic resources of a language available to any writer is its information-structuring potential. In English the writer has the useful facility of being able to cue the reader both to that information which has been introduced previously in the text, and to that which is being newly presented. S/he is also able to privilege (give prominence to) information which s/he particularly wishes to draw to the attention of the reader. The former is achieved through a tradition of presenting the known before the unknown (the given-new contract) and the latter by situating information of greatest significance at the 'head' (beginning) of each information unit (the theme-rheme sequence).

The given-new contract

Halliday describes the information structure of text as 'the ordering of the text, independently of its construction in terms of sentences, clauses and the like, into units of information on the basis of the distinction into given and new' (Halliday, 1976, p. 27). This preference in English for 'given' information to precede new information in a sentence is known as 'the given-new contract' (Clark and Haviland, 1977, in Bunton, 1993). This is the tacit agreement that the writer (or speaker) will usually place 'given' information—information which is not new to the reader, either by virtue of it being recoverable from a source in the environment, the preceding text or the context—at the beginning of an information unit (a clause or sentence), before 'new' information is introduced. The reader or listener is then optimally situated to receive the new information.
Sometimes only new information is presented in an information unit, the given being optional or to be inferred; that is, assumed to exist in the reader's consciousness (Chafe, 1976, in Bunton, 1993). 

**Theme and rhyme**
Within the resources available to a writer for structuring information in English text is a system by which s/he can alert the reader to that component of the information unit (clause, sentence) which is intended to be of particular significance. Typically, in English, the particular 'theme' of an information unit is placed at the beginning. Information considered of lesser significance (the rheme) follows. For example in *The family left for the coast* the emphasis (the theme or topic) of the sentence is on 'the family'. This is the typical (unmarked) format where the topic or theme is also the subject of the sentence. In *At six o'clock the family left for the coast* the emphasis has become the time at which the family left for the coast. In *With heavy hearts the family left for the coast* the emphasis has become the emotions experienced. The unmarked or typical structure would have been *The family left for the coast with heavy hearts*. As Wignell (1994) explains 'this is the pattern you get used to in English so that any other choice stands out against it. If anything else is the topical theme it is there for a reason' (p. 57). Thus the reader should immediately be alerted to the emphasis of the writer.

**Thematic progression and coherence**
The themes which introduce each information unit move the message of the whole text along. Different models of thematic progression have been identified (Danes, 1974 in Bunton, 1993):

- 'simple linear progression' (where the rheme of one sentence is thematised in the next),
- 'constant theme progression' (where successive sentences have the same theme) and 'derived theme progression' (where two or more themes derive from one 'hypertheme') ...
- 'extended constant theme' (after Lautamatti's 1978 'extended parallel progression') and 'extended linear progression', where these patterns are interrupted by sentences with other themes (p. 375).

The model of thematic progression used by the writer has implications for educators when selecting texts for students to study, or when rewriting texts for easier comprehension by students. Perera (1993, p. 369) maintains that text is most easily comprehended when themes are reiterated or synonyms used (high thematic density) and most difficult to comprehend

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19 These instances will obviously be more problematic for struggling readers.
20 Bunton (1993) defines thematic information as 'everything that precedes the verb of a main clause including preceding subordinate clauses' (p. 375).
when inference or knowledge of the world is thematised or where the reader is introduced frequently to new themes (low thematic density). She cautions that 'remote links will be harder than immediate ones' (Ibid, p. 369). Bunton concurs:

International English ... needs to abide more closely by the given-new contract, with a high proportion of constant theme progression mixed with linear progression, high thematic density, and low retrieval distances for given information (p. 383)

2.18 The grammatical cues which could assist readers from a non-literate, non-English-speaking background to generate greater coherence from English texts

A reader's ability to generate coherence depends upon intratextual, intertextual and extratextual factors. Townsend Carrithers and Bever (1987, p. 236) found in their research into discourse comprehension across a range of students and college students that unskilled readers rely more on schemata (semantic cues), and less on morphemic (grammatical) cues for thematic integration. The researchers maintain that to increase their comprehension skills, readers must learn to rely more on morphemic cues, e.g., word beginnings and endings, to interpret propositional meanings21. They also conclude that readers need instruction at the level of thematic organisation: what pre-suppositions the reader should be building up from cues in the text; how texts signal relations between propositions; how these signals indicate the degree of importance of a proposition; what expectations these signals should engender in the reader. The authors quote studies by several different research teams (Goldman, 1976; Perfetti and Goldman, 1976) which suggest that difficulties in reading comprehension may be connected to the inability to perceive the thematic relations between propositions in the text; for example, less skilled readers are not as sensitive to the structural distinctions between main and subordinate clauses.

Less skilled readers are often unaware of the significance of rhetorical structures in text. Rhetorical structures (words or phrases which act as signposts to different types of organisational patterning) perform critical functions for readers. Drawing upon the work of Grimes, Horowitz (1987)

21 Morphemic cues are provided by suffixes and prefixes. Word meaning can change with the addition or removal of an affix, for example, to understand the word 'disbelief' the reader must know the significance of the prefix 'dis'. In 'announcement' 'ment' signals the nominalisation of the action. In 'walked' the 'ed' indicates to the reader the time frame of the action.
describes four such structures common to English texts. The structure of *attribution* is characterised by items such as 'first', 'in addition' and 'also'. Rhetorical structures signalling *attribution* normally introduce propositions in a linear, list structure which lends itself to the provision of examples. In attribution, propositions are coordinate—they are related 'paratactically', or in parallel.

Another rhetorical device is *adversative* patterning, in which signalling items are used to compare and contrast propositions. This structure can be foregrounded by such items as 'however' or 'nevertheless'. In this pattern 'the favored view is put at a higher level than the opposed view in the text hierarchy of information' (p. 129). This is the situation which essentially characterises 'hypotactically' related propositions. Hypotaxis, according to Grimes (1975), is characterised by subordination, rather than parallel arguments; it implies classification, and may be essential to written language' (Horowitz, 1987, p. 129).

*Response* patterning is used for the posing of a problem and its potential solution. First the problem is stated and then the solution offered. Each is in parallel relationship to the other, the second argument being taken from the first.

In the pattern of *covariance* or cause and effect, there is a pattern of the cause preceding the effect. Such a pattern is generally characterised by the use of such items as 'therefore' or 'because'.

Of these patterns only the attributive is linear in structure. The others are all hierarchical; that is, the order in which the predicates are placed is an important element of the structure. Grimes points out that a writer can take a 'neutral' rhetorical predicate and can treat it paratactically or hypotactically. The example Horowitz provides is of two texts about the same topic. In the first, items of information are placed at an equal level with one another and not related to one another. In the second, because it is treated hypotactically, one item is given prominence.

Horowitz studied the effect of the above types of rhetorical structures on the comprehension of two different texts by secondary and tertiary students (aged 14 and 20). She reported that a knowledge of their
significance is only brought into full use by readers, when the topic or field of the discourse is known to them, to some extent. In other words rhetorical structures are not significant per se. It is 'the interaction of these structures with other elements of discourse and social-contextual factors' that is likely to be significant (Horowitz, 1987, p.147). The grammatical, semantic and socio-cultural aspects of text are inextricably related.

2.19 Some considerations for the readers of English texts: a synthesis

Comprehension theorists are particularly concerned with the cognitive processes involved in the act of reading or making sense of a text. Schema theory and the theory of macrostructures suggest that the reader must make connections between the text and with his/her experience of the real world and upon schema (organised knowledge structures in the reader's mind), then process sequences of propositions in the text both from the top down (macro to micro) and the bottom up (micro to macro).

Because of the highly embedded nature of many English texts (a characteristic of 'argumentative' intent), the intratextual reference devices employed by writers (cohesion) and the use of macro and microstructures in the way described above, reading cannot be considered simply a linear process. Mentally the reader must travel backwards and forwards, upwards and downwards in the text to make connections. A highly cohesive text greatly assists the reader to do this. Deixis is another cohesive device which is employed by a writer to situate the reader in the temporal and spatial context of the events in the text.

Extensive use of nominalisation is another characteristic feature of English text which enables a writer to pack ideas closely together and relate them to each other, facilitating argument and discussion especially. Since a single nominalisation can encompass many concepts in one word information can be very tightly packed. Fortunately certain information-structuring rules have developed in English which are helpful for readers—known information is presented before unknown and more significant information before less significant information.

The reader is cued to the particular relationships between clauses or sentences, that is, either attributive, adversative, responsive or covariant,
by the choice of word or phrase which connects them. A wide range of such rhetorical structures exists in English. At word level readers can use morphemic cues (parts of words) to help them make meaning; for example, prefixes, suffixes and word stems.

Successful readers (and writers) are able to recognise and utilise these features of English text.

2.20 Potentially useful strategies from the literature for teaching discourse comprehension

A search of the literature produced a comprehensive range of strategies for assisting students to comprehend texts compatible with the three approaches to text being highlighted in this study.

Global considerations

According to F. Christie the choice of text is critical. She maintains that significant language skills can be developed only in contexts where there is a need to grapple with significant meanings and hence to construct significant knowledge (F. Christie, 1989). Above all, there must be a purpose for reading, and texts must be of interest and relevance.

Educators must take account of the importance of 'relatedness' to Aboriginal readers. M. Christie (1989, p. 29) points out that

scant regard has traditionally been paid to the situation in which the content was produced, who told the story, why it was told who was involved, what places were involved, how the people who produced the information were involved with the places that were mentioned, and how the media makers participated in the whole situation. These are the factors which contribute to significant learning in the Aboriginal world, yet these are exactly the factors which are habitually edited out of the Western media in order to make it 'objective'.

What M. Christie seems to be saying here is that, for Aboriginal students to be willing to engage at all, meaning, in relational terms, needs to be restored to the text22.

22This is borne out by a colleague who reported to this researcher that, when she was studying a set text with students which involved a non-Aboriginal author writing about a fictional situation set in an Aboriginal context, students wanted above all to establish who the author of the text was, what authority he had to say the things he was saying, what relationship he had to them and their lives and how he had managed to quote the words of an Aboriginal countryman at the beginning of the book (Miller, 1993, pers. comm.).
The selection of texts for study should be representative of those that members of the language community actually encounter (Frederiksen, 1977). They should neither be too easy nor too hard for students (Wales, 1990). They should demonstrate elaborated language because, by only engaging with short, simple texts, poor readers simply get poorer (Unsworth, 1991). Scribner and Cole (1973) also assert from their experience that simple texts do not empower students for further learning. Stotsky (1987, p. 384) sees a need for 'continued exposure to increasing levels of lexical density to help [students] absorb the lexical richness and density of written language'. In similar vein, Smith and Elkins (1992, p. 248) note that poor models of text provide insufficient exposure to 'the more elaborated language necessary to create strong cohesive links in text'. Wales (1990) also cautions against texts that are too easy. She maintains that the value of the study of more-challenging texts for these students is that it 'gives access to complexities of the language that may not be perceived through the spoken language' (p. 172).

Students need to be aware of the time it takes to craft a text (Phelps, 1988). They must be assisted to see that it is a process of development and elaboration as well as a process of refinement. This process of refinement involves packing the text more and more densely, relating what has gone before with what has come after in a 'logical' fashion. Such refinement is carried out for reasons of economy and style. The process of arriving at the final text Phelps terms 'the evolution of structure through shadow texts'.

To enable students to come to these understandings there must also be lots of discussion of texts. Teachers must make sure, however, that students have the vocabulary to do so. Samuels (1987) suggests that, at the most basic level, teachers do this by simply asking students, for example, how many words are in a particular sentence, or how many sentences are in a particular paragraph, or how many paragraphs there are on a particular page. As the level of textual study becomes more detailed, other terminology will need to be introduced, explicitly taught, and similarly checked.

Explicitness is a deliberate strategy of Boomer's (1989, p. 10) 'epic'23 teacher, who 'manipulates students explicitly and self-consciously'. For

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23After Epic (or Brechtian) Theatre. Epic theatre 'deliberately draws attention to itself as theatre' it does so in order to encourage the audience to develop 'a critical frame of mind as well as an awareness
This teacher supersedes the progressivist teacher of the 1980s whose priority was the naturalising of school behaviours and whose influence, while all pervasive, was made almost invisible. Epic teachers appreciate the political nature of literacy teaching. They make students aware that the curriculum is not natural, but constructed—by the teacher or teacher and students at the local classroom level and by the state at a global, societal level. Epic teachers engage in a dialogue with students, are prepared to take risks along with students by moving across familiar role and cultural boundaries, and join with students in unknown terrain.

Preparation for reading the text

Students need to be prepared for texts which are difficult and potentially problematic. Graves, Cooke and Labergue (1983) found that previewing difficult material with junior high school students significantly improved their comprehension. The researchers provided students with a synopsis of the text to be studied and found that students liked being given the fairly detailed previews and found them useful. Students displayed an increased ability to locate and recall the propositions in the text, and, most importantly, to make the inferences necessary to do this. It was the researchers’ view that, far from simply doing students’ work for them, teachers who provide them with previews are enabling their students to concentrate less on the details of what they are reading, and more on higher level matters, such as making inferences. Differently expressed, this practice provides students with the macrostructures of the text, enabling them to use that knowledge to work out the microstructures.

Students need to be provided with input on the cultural context of the text they are about to read (Wales, 1990). Steffensen (1991) also speaks of the need to build up students’ background knowledge. Freebody and Anderson (1983) insist that for best results, relevant knowledge (schema) must be ‘activated’ prior to processing, if comprehension is to occur.

Nunan (1987), Searle (1989) and Phelps (1988) all see a need to represent knowledge in ways that are not necessarily print based. Nunan advises teachers to have students each draw a ‘diagram’ of what they actually know about the topic of the text. Searle describes using ‘semantic
mapping' with students to elicit prior knowledge of a topic and then regularly throughout the topic to update information and review knowledge. Semantic maps can involve print, drawings, symbols or a combination. Phelps refers to 'discourse maps' and stresses their particular use in analysing a text, describing them as:

any representation of textual meaning that renders the organisation (i.e., structure) of the discourse more vivid to the senses and mind by condensing meaning elements and arranging them in a spatial array that reveals their relations ... trees, flow graphs, networks, matrices (Phelps, 1988, p. 138).

Nunan also advises teachers and students to fully exploit any maps, charts, diagrams and photographs which accompany texts. Students should be encouraged to examine the title and any headings or subheadings and be encouraged to draw some tentative conclusions about the text. They should be assisted to scan for frequently repeated words (lexical reiteration) to gain more of an overview of what the text is about (Nunan, 1987; Samuels, 1987). Nunan suggests highlighting clues on a photocopy of the original article. Any glossaries which have been provided should be studied. Since the purpose of reading the text should be in the forefront of students' minds as they read, this can be facilitated by asking questions of the text. This involves students and teacher drafting questions about the text prior to reading it.

Bos and Anders (1992), in their work with 'students with learning disabilities', have developed an interactive model for text comprehension and content learning (pp. 228-230). They focus on the teaching and learning of both content knowledge and strategic knowledge—the cognitive and metacognitive strategies readers must employ in order to comprehend what they are reading. They focus on three major interactive strategies: semantic feature analysis and semantic mapping; and semantic/syntactic feature analysis.

In semantic feature analysis the text is previewed with attention to various textual clues: titles, headings, subheadings, highlighted words, margin notes. Possible key concepts and supporting concepts are noted. The overall topic or superordinate concept of the text is ascertained. After this the concepts are organised into categories in some way to give a picture of their relative position or role. They might be: coordinate and subordinate; different steps in a process; different characteristics of the
same thing; other examples of the main idea; they might represent different functions; and so on.

Semantic mapping takes the form of a relationship map or web. It is constructed by teachers and students together in order to best describe the relationships between the concepts or characters in the text. The form it takes is only limited by the imagination of teachers and students. In the process teachers' and students' background knowledge of the different concepts can be stimulated and shared.

Teacher and students can construct the map or chart prior to reading the text and add information or make changes to them as a result of the reading. Charts and maps can later serve as blueprints for writing essays on the topic.

**Reading the text**

Smith and Elkins (1992, p. 248) recommend a collaborative approach to reading and the sharing of interpretations of text with others. They maintain that these experiences provide models and extend the concept of "text" held by less effective readers and allow them to join the community of readers'. Unsworth also maintains that inexperienced readers need to engage, as a group, with text. He insists that these readers can be assisted to read challenging and motivating texts provided scaffolding is given by the teacher and by more experienced readers—and provided that scaffolding is accompanied by explicit discussion of the features of written text, and the process of comprehension. Samuels (1987) and Fitzgerald (1979) also see shared study of a text as an opportunity for demonstration, modelling and explicitness about text including an opportunity for explicit instruction in the three language cue systems which will assist students with the reading process (the semantic, the syntactic and the grapho-phonic).

The need for students to become sensitive to the prosody of English (its rhythm, tone, pauses, pitch) is highlighted by Wales (1990). Reading a text aloud together (or having it read aloud by a competent and expressive reader) provides an opportunity for students who are not native speakers of English, to tap into the rhythm of the English speaker or speakers in the group, to read in 'meaningful language chunks' and to read (or to be
carried along) with a speed that is sufficient to maintain the flow of the text. Townsend, Carrithers and Bevers (1987, p. 237) maintain that attention to phrases is also likely to assist with the 'propositional perception' mentioned earlier: '... practice in reading phrases rather than individual words, listening to skilled readers imposing intonation on printed language would all be helpful in increasing the propositional perception processes [of unskilled readers].

Dowhower (1987) researched the effect of repeated reading on readers' fluency and comprehension. She found (p. 389) that the 'rate, accuracy, comprehension, and prosodic reading' of what she termed, young 'transitional' readers, 'were significantly improved by repeated reading practice'. Repeated reading of a passage she found (irrespective of whatever other teaching about the passage is going on) leads to students reading it faster, with more accuracy and with more understanding. She speculates that significant improvement occurs because repeated readings help generate 'an ever-increasing bank of quickly identified words and offer[s] multiple practice opportunities for those words' (p. 403). As many of these words will appear in other texts, this results in a high degree of vocabulary overlap, and leads to increasing reader success over a series of passages.

A highly dense or poorly written text can be 'unpacked' for (or with) students. Long, complex sentences can be revised so that the same concepts are expressed in a simpler way. However, in unpacking the text, the cohesive ties and links must be preserved (Samuels, 1987). Teachers must also remember that this practice is simply a means to an end and that, ultimately, it is the more complex version of the text with which students must learn to deal.

Conversely the practice of 'sentence combining' is one which also produces benefits for students. Wilkinson and Patty (1993) studied the effect that practice in sentence combining (linking clauses together to make one complex clause) had on the reading comprehension of fourth grade students. The researchers wanted to discover if readers' knowledge of cohesion would be increased by the practice and if so whether that

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24 The author uses Chall's (1983) description to define a reader who is transitional: a transitional reader (a) makes use of slow, word-by-word reading and (b) is able to adequately decode.
increased understanding of cohesion would lead to increased comprehension. Their study strongly suggested that this was the case, and that understanding of logical connectives (additive, adversative, causal and temporal) was also positively affected.

Making meaning from the grammar of a text
An important task of the reader is to use the grammar of the text in an attempt to arrive at an understanding of the main topic. Many of these grammatical cues can be studied more closely during subsequent revisitings of the text. For example, students can be encouraged to track cohesive chains—the use of alternative words or expressions for the same idea (collocation), pronouns and their original referents (reference chains) (Smith and Elkins, 1992, Fitzgerald, 1979). Students’ attention can be drawn to the function of punctuation in the text and what it contributes to the meaning (Wales, 1990; Horowitz, 1987). Any idiomatic language in the text can be identified and explained (Wales, 1990). Teacher and students can study the overall logic of discourse (Wales, 1990; Irwin, 1986)—how each sentence is linked to the one before, and how each paragraph is linked to the one before.

To encourage readers to approach any text critically, Walsh (1991) urges an examination of text as much as for what is not there, as for what is. In like vein Kress encourages the reader to ask: ‘why is this topic being written about?; how is this topic being written about?’; and ‘what other ways of writing about the topic are there?’ (1985, p. 7). The teacher’s function, according to Kress, is to construct particular kinds of readers—readers who are able to see how they are being positioned in the texts of the culture as a whole. He suggest that asking the question ‘what kind of discourses are in contention here?’ of a text with students will reveal many of these differences in operation.

Supplementary activities related to the text
F. Christie (1992) recommends that teachers and students practise transforming written language into spoken and vice versa. Such practice will highlight for students the denseness of written text.

Jongsma (1980), in his examination of the research literature available on the use of cloze procedure in the teaching of reading, found it to be
particularly effective in the teaching of reading comprehension. Cloze procedures delete certain words from a passage and require students to insert the word or phrase they think is missing. The passage can be one which is completely unfamiliar to students, it can be the text being studied, or it can be a rewritten version or paraphrase of that text. Deletions can be made randomly (every seventh word) or selectively, that is, by omitting certain types of words—prepositions or conjunctions or verbs. Jongsm found that the effect of selective deletions is greater than that of random deletions. Cloze instruction is increasingly effective when cloze passages are negotiated as a group (see also Hutchins, 1981) and involve discussion about the appropriateness of word choice and the signalling items which gave the clue as to the missing item.

Levenston, Nir, and Blum-Kulka (1982) suggest that at various times, and by using carefully selected deletions, cloze procedure can be effectively used to test, and/or to give practice in, linguistic (grammatical) knowledge, pragmatic (world) knowledge, and textual knowledge (ability to recognise and use the cohesive features). This last they term 'discourse cloze'. Discourse cloze attempts to test reading comprehension at the 'higher' level, that is, at the macro-level since deriving the macro-propositions in a text is the ultimate goal of the reading. In discourse cloze only those items are deleted which mark, in one way or another, relationships between propositions in the text. This includes the linguistic categories termed cohesive by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Halliday (1985): anaphoric (backwards) referencing items, substituted items (of a word for a word or a whole phrase), conjunctions (words or phrases used to connect propositions and define the way in which they are to be related by the reader) and various lexical devices including repetition of an item, hyponymy (the use of a superarching term), antonymy (the juxtaposing of opposites) and collocation (the use of an associated term).

The unique property of discourse cloze according to the authors is its concentration on macro-deletions only. This could enable a teacher to cultivate one specific aspect of reading comprehension—unravelling the macro-structures of a text. It is this aspect of reading comprehension which they believe to be frequently neglected, while most effort goes into the understanding of sentences. Through the procedure of discourse cloze and the discussion which accompanies it, the authors maintain that students
can be introduced to the language and the thinking necessary for the highest levels of reading comprehension.

Strategies, however, need to be framed within a theory which takes account of the nature of adult learners, adult education principles and some understanding of how learning occurs.

2.21 Pedagogy or andragogy: education principles for the non-urban context

For Paulo Freire all teaching approaches or pedagogies reflect a particular underlying belief about the nature of human beings (Berggren, 1975). Depending upon the philosophy of the educator or the education system a learner can be viewed primarily as an empty container, an assembler of parts, a meaning maker (Halliday, 1978), a self-organising system Vygotsky, 1962, 1987), a partner in dialogue (Knowles, 1980, 1984) a reluctant learner, a 'definitional learner', that is, incapable of not learning (Smith, 1986, p. 273), an agent of change (Freire, in Berggren, 1975), and so on.

In recent years the concept of 'andragogy'—the art and science of teaching adults (Knowles, 1980; 1984) has developed. It is characterised by an approach which is non-directive, dialogic, diagnostic and problem oriented. Andragogy centralises the goals of the learners and provides a structure to assist them toward fulfilling their aspirations.

Nomenclature is revealing. The relationship between 'teacher' and 'pupil' is clearly one of inequality. When the teacher becomes a 'facilitator' or an 'educator' and the pupil a 'learner' or a 'student' there is a commensurate shift in the balance of power between the two. In reality the roles of the different parties—teacher and taught—will shift from time to time, but one role relationship will tend to predominate. Adult learners may initially lack confidence, leading some educators to underestimate their ability. Moreover, when school experience (not life experience and knowledge) is emphasised, adult students often perform below their capacity (Knox, in Brookfield, 1986, p. 27). To treat an adult as though, like a child, s/he had no wider context in which to place new learning, denies that person's hard-won knowledge, and is insulting to the integrity of the adult human being. Adults bring multiple roles and responsibilities to
learning. These roles and responsibilities form the constraints within which their formal learning must be accommodated. They are also a rich resource which can be drawn upon in new learning. For adults 'life transitions have provided the opportunity for reinterpretation and rearrangement of past experience' (Smith, 1982, in Brookfield, 1986, p. 30).

A facilitator or teacher of adults must behave authentically (Rogers, 1970), as one adult human being to another, eschewing the temptation to adopt a stereotypical role. Both educator and student must be prepared to enter a risky no-man's land, to question their taken-for-granted assumptions and to become aware of how they have each been shaped by their environment and experience. Adult learners, Freire maintained, must be prepared to problematise the total reality in which they are situated (Freire in Berggren, 1975). The task of a teacher or facilitator is to assist learners to appreciate their position in society and how this constrains their goals and the ways in which they learn. Such dialogue involves: checking of understanding; allowing one's ideas to be criticised by others, exploring one's appreciation of the limitations placed upon one's consciousness by historical and social circumstances and being prepared to change one's approach as such awareness creates new frameworks within which to act (Freire, in Boud, 1987, p. 227).

It can be disempowering for students to dwell on the extent of their oppression. Action should be part of critical reflection. This is praxis. However, Boud cautions that some students may not want or are not ready to take action. Some oppression cannot be transformed individually. It needs collective social and political action (Boud, 1987). Educators must be careful that they are not simply setting their students up to take action when they themselves are not prepared to take transformative action in their own lives. Action, personal or collective, must be negotiated.

2.22 A theory of learning which supports challenging the learner

The Russian psychologist Vygotsky viewed learning as 'a dialectical process'. According to this view, human beings, as active organisms, continually interact with their world, acting upon it and in response to it,
changing it irrevocably in the process but also being fundamentally changed by it, in a never-ending flux.

For Vygotsky learning is an ongoing process of developing concepts or knowledge structures, a development which is followed in turn by 'the destruction, reconstruction and transition of those structures to structures of the higher, [i.e., inclusive], type' (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 124, my interpolation). He repeatedly emphasises the capacity of human beings 'to create higher order structures that, in effect, replace and give new power to the conceptual structures that one climbed over en route to higher order mastery' (Bruner, in Vygotsky, 1962).

For the formation of new concepts to begin, Vygotsky maintains that 'a problem must arise that cannot be solved otherwise than through the formation of new concepts' (p. 55). It is his contention that when we come across a situation to which we are unable to accommodate or adapt, we become consciously aware of what we are trying to do or are being called upon to do (Vygotsky, 1987, pp. 167-241). Awareness or consciousness means generalising which, in turn, entails 'forming a superordinate concept that includes the given concept as a particular case' (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 92).

Two researchers, Wilkinson and Patty (1993), adopted this idea of Vygotsky's and its later development by Bruner and Luria, and used it to support their notion that

a reader's interaction with complex structures within a text might create dissonance (resulting in frustration) or may according to Vygotsky (1962) increase awareness of linguistic possibilities and at times generate new meaning or novel semantic combinations (Wilkinson and Patty, 1993, p. 105).

Researchers Wilkinson and Patty (1993) premised their study of the effects of enhanced cohesion knowledge on text comprehension on the theories of Vygotsky (1964), Bruner (1966) and Luria (1976). For them Vygotsky's theory of dissonance suggests that readers 'learn about syntax, cohesion

\[25\text{This has links with the theory of discourse analysis, described by Frederiksen & Donin (1991) who posit cognitive transformation processes which convert local meanings into global meanings and in which the reader uses local sentence meanings to construct the global knowledge structure of the text in a predominantly 'bottom-up' process. Conversely, in writing, the authors maintain that a predominantly 'top-down' process occurs. Prigogine & Stengers (1984) (see next page) also emphasise the constant interplay between the microstructure and the macrostructure in the evolution of the organism.}\]
and language structure through the challenge of making meaning from formally written discourse that is more complex than they can construct themselves' (p. 105). The discomfort experienced, they suggest, triggers a situation of heightened sensitivity to new learning and results in a breakthrough to enhanced understanding. The reader is to be thrust into the challenging situation of searching, with difficulty, for familiar patterns in unfamiliar material. However, 'readers' exposure to complex structures with sophisticated syntax and cohesive elements may not by itself necessarily alter the syntactic repertoire or awareness of cohesion. Perhaps instruction and focused practice are also needed' (p. 106). Hence their focus on the practice of combining sentences using a range of connectives, with positive results.

Vygotsky's theory of concept development evolved into a theory of education (Bruner in Vygotsky, 1987). Vygotsky rejected the notion of learning as a linear process, believing it instead to be characterised by periodicity, unevenness in the development of some functions, metamorphosis or qualitative transformation of one form into another, intertwining of external and internal factors, and adaptive processes which overcome impediments (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 73).

This portrays learning as a much more chaotic process than earlier theorists had envisaged it to be, involving revolution, turbulence, upheaval, internal and external change. In this version, leaps in understanding are made at irregular intervals. In his view, development occurs at the point when external knowledge or 'truth' which has been experienced through interaction with others or with the environment, is converted and becomes internalised; that is, is transformed from 'outer' to 'inner' dialogue. According to Vygotsky, there is always a gap between knowledge that has been internalised (actually developed) and knowledge that is 'in the process of maturation' (being learned). This gap between development and learning he terms the 'zone of proximal development': a condition of readiness for new learning. This is an unstable transitional state of great sensitivity and also of great potential. Vygotsky emphasises that the most effective role of an educator

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26As a way of assisting students to comprehend more challenging texts, students were taught to combine simple sentences into more complex units in different ways, using logical connectives and other structural devices. Cloze tests later showed that this instruction had a positive effect on reading comprehension.

27Prigogine (1984, p. 176) describes it as 'a delicate interplay between random fluctuations (in the vicinity of a bifurcation) and deterministic laws (between bifurcations)'. As a bifurcation approaches, deterministic laws break down.
is to maximise this potential by helping to speed up the maturation process. John-Steiner and Souberman (1978, p. 123), in their 'afterword' describe this as a methodology which 'telescopes change'.

Vygotsky emphasises the important role of collaboration and co-operation in learning. As 'experienced learners' themselves educators should assist the learner by becoming involved and intervening or assisting at critical stages in particular learning sequences. From this notion of Vygotsky's has developed the pedagogical strategy of supported learning or 'scaffolding' (Bruner, 1983). Scaffolding, as its name suggests, is rather like the process of erecting a frame to support the construction of a building. It is not until the last vital structural elements have been put securely in place that the framework can be safely dismantled. In practice scaffolding means becoming involved with learners in a task or problem-solving situation that they would be unable to complete or solve unaided, and framing the discourse for them as it proceeds in such a way that approximations on the part of the [learner] can legitimately contribute to task completion (Gray, 1990, p. 7). According to Gray it is possible to provide scaffolding that will support the learner in the learning task 'without failure, even with minimum input from the [learner]' (p. 13, my emphasis). This has important implications for working with students who are unhappy to take risks and whose preferred method of learning is to observe closely over repeated occurrences joining in the process only when confident and only to the degree they feel able to do at that point in time.

2.23 Useful teaching/learning theories: a summary

In the last two sections some pedagogical and teaching/learning considerations for the educator were discussed.

The theory of education which informs this study is a theory of adult learning. The single most important factor in adult learning seems to be the relationship established between teacher and student. The most fruitful relationship can be developed when both teacher and student are prepared to reveal their aspirations, to be 'real' for each other, to problematise their immediate situations, to value each other's life

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28 In an interesting parallel, again from evolutionary theory, Prigogine and Stengers (1984) also acknowledge the role of an external field in 'assisting bifurcation'.

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experience, and to draw upon it and to take action together when appropriate. The study of a text together may call upon all these abilities.

The theory of learning which informs this study is Vygotsky’s theory of dissonance which has just been described. This theory seems to have relevance for the study of text since it implies that when challenged by a new or foreign concept (a proposition) beyond his or her current knowledge and experience, a learner under a degree of pressure or stress may leap beyond the problem idea to form a superordinate concept which encompasses it. It justifies the choice of a text beyond the ability of students to construct. The notion of scaffolding is also crucial when placing readers in a situation of stress.

2.24 The literature reviewed

Since Aboriginal adults from non-urban contexts have been largely excluded from national literacy research projects, their needs and the issues surrounding the teaching of literacy in these contexts, have gone unaddressed. This study seeks to remedy this situation. Previous literacy programs among Aboriginal people have met with failure. This may indicate active resistance to either domestication for government purposes or individualistic teaching methods which threaten social cohesion or both. Past failures suggest the need to respond to the needs of people as they express them, and to develop ways of negotiating acceptable teaching/learning practices. Aboriginal educators in north east Arnhem Land have developed a two-way education theoretical framework which may provide the basis of a more acceptable model, with its emphasis on reciprocity and mutuality. The model could also be applied to the study of text with students.

The underlying assumption of this study is that texts are the material outcomes of Discourses and that, by critically examining a text from the threefold perspectives of grammar, socio-cultural understandings and Discourse, a transformational level of reading is possible. Much depends upon our definition of literacy, whether as product or process, whether as technology for individual, group or societal change, or for personal growth and employment or for the production of 'good' citizenship. It is difficult to disentangle one from the other so much has literacy become an all
pervasive feature of our society. This study accepts that there are benefits to be gained from literacy for those Aboriginal people who have indicated their wish to work in a particular field, provided that the practice of literacy encourages an informed critical stance. Wells suggests that there are in fact levels of 'literateness'. These seem to relate to a reader's ability to critically evaluate what is being read. One's degree of comfort with the idea of continually critiquing one's reality, including written text, probably has much to do with one's notion of 'truth'—whether as socially constructed or as eternal and unchanging—and the role language plays. This study takes the view that 'truth is' fleeting and socially constructed through language. Language is central to the process by simultaneously generating new possibilities and constraining others.

English written texts display particular characteristics; metaphor (some fresh, some faded) and nominalisation (grammatical metaphor) pervade the English language. English text is also characterised by the particularity of its logical organisation (its rhetorical structures), the way in which written text coheres (its cohesion) and the special ways in which it locates the action of the text in time and space for the reader (deixis). For the reader all this has implications—reading written text must be understood as a strategic act, requiring particular understandings and mental behaviours. A reader must be constantly engaged in 'inference making'. The reader must also develop a knowledge of the (culturally constructed) propositions encoded in the language, an awareness that language choice has significance, sufficient knowledge of the social background of the text to contextualise and an awareness of being positioned by the text and its contending Discourses.

This study has selected three views about language which it is hoped will maximise the teaching/learning potential of the study of a written text with students in cross-cultural contexts. The first is Systemic linguistics with its important notions of text as embedded in social context, language choice as an indicator of the stance of the speaker or writer, text as as having the property of cohesion and text as realising the particular system of information organisation which characterises English.

According to Proposition Theory, what a text actually coheres are propositions or idea units. This view of text is grounded in the notion
that, in making sense of themselves and their reality, human beings name the people, the things, the relationships and the events around them. Many of these propositions will be common across human experience, others will be unique to particular cultures. This universal background to proposition theory seems to this researcher to make it particularly useful in cross-cultural contexts, opening up text to the examination of both universal and culturally specific ideas. It complements the view of Systemic grammar regarding cohesion.

Critical Literacy and the Theory of Discourses are closely related. Critical theorists question the nature of 'literacy' and the majority view that it is a Good Thing because they insist that other social factors exist which constrain social mobility, even with a high degree of skill; namely, race, gender and socio-economic situation. Critical theorists see literacy as a specific cultural practice which maintains the divisions in society. Critical readers question how they are being 'positioned' by the text and what change they might want to make as a result. Foucault's theory of Discourses shares Critical Theory’s concern with the distribution of power in society.

According to Discourse theory, power relations (and in Foucault's view power is neither good nor bad) are continually being negotiated or enforced or transacted in the course of every day interactions and in workplaces. These power relations are continually constructed and maintained through language. They are encoded in language: in the particular terminology and language use of the field; in bodies: in the particular behaviours which are customary for practitioners. They are further systematised through the practice of literacy and the production of texts (oral and written). Since each text encodes the wider context, a careful reading can detect the ideologies and power relations inherent in the field and in the local site in particular. Because it is at local sites that power relations can more easily be transformed, a text from a local newspaper for example would be an example of a potentially useful site for exploration.

The use of all three approaches to text allows readers (with support) to examine idea units (propositions) within the text, to see how these ideas

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29 Gutwinski (1976) sees no difficulty in looking at a piece of writing either as text, that is, as having texture (cohering) or as discourse since Halliday’s cohesive categories can be seen as features which
are being related (by means of logical connectors), to follow the intratextual connections which the writer uses to integrate meanings (cohesion), to gauge the writer's attitude to what is being said (lexical choice), to detect the Discourses present in the text (the imagery or faded metaphors), the Discourses absent from the text, to decide how s/he is being positioned by the writer, the text and determine what his/her response is.

Because of its broad societal perspective yet specific focus on language/knowledge fields, the Theory of Discourses provides an excellent theoretical framework for this study.

The methodology which educators employ will certainly reflect the power relationship between educator and learner. For adult learners the most effective pedagogy is one which respects the adult status of the learner as community member, as social agent and as partner in dialogue. Educators who fail to value the life experience of the adult learner, whose methodology constantly singles out the individual or who fail to negotiate the focussed or non-focussed nature of tasks with students, experience resistance from Aboriginal students. Teaching/learning needs to take account of the fact that, according to Vygotsky, all learners make leaps in comprehension at certain points in time. Scaffolding by peers and teachers can accelerate and support this process. The practice of reading, especially shared reading which mines the text for a rich seam of meaning, is understood by this researcher to be an important scaffold for writing.

2.25 Methodological considerations

While rich in source material of different kinds, only a very small percentage of all the literature reviewed offered practical suggestions as to methodology. The survey approach taken by Wickert (1989) and Christie et al., (1993) seemed the most appropriate for the distances involved. However, they sought to obtain information directly from the client population. For this researcher that was going to be difficult if not impossible. In addition, this researcher was determined to address the

[represent on the grammatic ... stratum, some of the manifestations of the discourse structure from the semologic stratum' (p. 29).]
need for assistance with literacy teaching which was obvious both from personal experience and confirmed by an examination of the study by Holland et al. (1990). None of the research in the area had attempted to do this.

The decision to target educators rather than students and to use text analysis to ascertain their level of textual knowledge and current practice is the kind of decision it is now difficult to explain with reference to any one particular source. Rather it was a solution which, after a period of frustration similar to that described by Vygotsky, simply 'popped into' this researcher's head.

In the following chapter the methodology selected, and the instrument designed for the purpose, are described in detail.
CHAPTER 3

A DESCRIPTION OF THE METHODOLOGY USED IN THE STUDY

3.1 Introduction

This research project has a twofold purpose. It is designed to build up a profile of the educators who are currently involved in working with Aboriginal adults from non-urban centres in literacy-related courses, their practice, the institutions who employ them and the kind of courses in which students are enrolled. It is also designed to ascertain the level of knowledge of English text amongst educators themselves, whether they are using discourse analysis of texts as a literacy teaching strategy and, if so, to assess what level of understanding about the English language, the culture of English-speaking people and the characteristics of written English they are able to assist students to attain.

In the first section of this chapter recent studies in the area of adult literacy are reviewed for their potential to inform the methodological approach taken by the present study. The reasons for the selection of subjects for this current study are then discussed. The research instrument itself is then described in detail and the advantages of the questionnaire approach are listed. Both versions of the text for analysis are presented and then field procedures for the dissemination and receipt of questionnaires, data collection and processing are described. Finally the limitations of the methodology are discussed.

3.2 Recent studies

The most recent research into adult literacy in the Northern Territory was carried out under the auspices of the Centre for Studies in Language Education at the Northern Territory University in Darwin. This was a study into the literacy proficiency of a sample of adults in urban contexts of the Northern Territory and was a follow-on from a national study conducted some years before (see Chapter 2). Only a very small percentage
of Aboriginal people (3.34 per cent) were included in the sample. The research instrument took the form of an interview schedule, together with some reading and writing tasks, (the survey was unusual in this regard, cf. Wickert) and the interviews were conducted by non-Aboriginal professionals. The findings of the Northern Territory survey replicated those of the national survey: that there is no single point at which people become literate; that literacy is a matter of degree; that participants had difficulties with even the simplest tasks; that those adults who have had less than six years of primary education are more likely to have difficulties with literacy; that people from non-English-speaking backgrounds are more likely to experience greater difficulty with literacy in English than native speakers; that the younger the reading and writing process is begun the greater the opportunity for success; and that those who exhibit difficulties are more likely to be unemployed.

Simply replicating the Christie et al. study in non-urban contexts might have seemed a logical research choice. However, in the opinion of this researcher, this would have been inappropriate. We know already, without an official survey, that the percentage of people in communities who have difficulty with English literacy is much, much higher than in urban centres (Culmsee, 1992, pers. comm.). It is also clear that the cohort falls into the high risk category on all counts. Even if the research instrument was modified and Aboriginal interviewers substituted, it is still doubtful if participation rates would be high enough to yield an adequate number of respondents, unless some other way was found to elicit the information. We also know that it is not necessarily vital for everyone in a community to be literate in English, that 'illiteracy' is not necessarily problematic in these contexts. So why subject people to the indignity of 'failing' or imply that their life is somewhat impoverished by the lack of facility with print? One must ask: Whose interest would it serve that this information be collected?

Furthermore the Christie study was not designed to investigate any of the causes of difficulties being experienced by respondents or to recommend

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1Interestingly, one of the interviewers noted that although there were not many refusals, 'most of those who did refuse were Aboriginal' (Christie, Clark, Gerol & Palmer, 1993, p. 19). The tentative reason offered by this interviewer for the refusal by Aboriginal people to take part was that perhaps they didn't like the idea of a "test" (Ibid, p. 19).

2See vol 1 p. 9 of the report for reasons why non-urban areas were not included, especially mentioned are inappropriate methodology and cultural specificity of literacy practices.
ways in which they might be minimised. For this researcher a greater need was to offer more immediate assistance to those community members who have created a need to improve their English literacy by enrolling in a tertiary course of study and to help them, albeit indirectly to overcome some of the obstacles to their success.

3.3 Selection of subjects

The field of adult literacy education in the Northern Territory encompasses students from both urban and non-urban contexts. There is at least one important difference between the two groups from the point of view of this study. Aboriginal people who have been born in urban centres usually have English as their first language. For Aboriginal people in rural areas, the language and the cultural contexts of English are much more foreign. The difficulty they experience with English texts is of a different order. Therefore to define the study more usefully and to reduce the number of participants to a more manageable level and because of the researcher's previous work in the non-urban context, it was decided to focus on those contexts where educators and students experience the more extreme cross-cultural situation.

Some of the reasons for the selection of educators rather than the students as the target group for this study have already been discussed. These include the time and financial constraints on this researcher and the unsuitability of the questionnaire approach with students. In the researcher's own experience there has been ample confirmation that many Aboriginal adults, particularly teachers and assistant teachers see a need to learn English (and literacy for specific purposes), but still feel that its mastery eludes them. This is after several years of schooling in English and in spite of their clearly demonstrated ability to learn other languages. Nor, as already mentioned, was it considered a good use of the opportunity this study represents to ask students whether or not they want to learn English and how they should be taught. While students undoubtedly do have valuable insights into the process of language learning and teaching, it is not their ultimate responsibility to decide the details of the teaching program.
A certain amount is already known about the learning situation which Aboriginal adults prefer (Geeves, 1988). Adult education principles also offer guidelines about andragogy, or the teaching of adults. However, by and large students from non-urban contexts do not yet have a sufficient level of knowledge of the written mode, or the foreign language or the social and political context of the language to answer the kind of questions being asked in this study. That is not to say, however, that they are not intensely interested in the issue and in looking at English in a way that goes beyond the superficial.

3.4 The research design

A questionnaire was identified as the most appropriate data-gathering instrument for this survey. Data collection by questionnaire is probably the most common method in education research (Wiersma, 1991) because surveys are useful for identifying patterns and ascertaining attitudes and perceptions. There is no limit to the number of survey participants and surveys are just as appropriate for smaller numbers as for larger groups.

A face-to-face interview, or even a telephone interview, is a very expensive option since the educators in this study and their students are located in non-urban communities throughout the Northern Territory. It would also have taken more time than that available to this researcher.

For the purposes of the current study, and again because of time constraints, a cross-sectional rather than a longitudinal design was considered appropriate.

3.5 Advantages of the questionnaire approach

It was known that almost all the educators who would be likely to take part in the study were first-language speakers of English and highly literate. It was therefore assumed that most of the questionnaire would present them with no real problem. Accordingly it was anticipated that it would only take respondents, on average, 30-40 minutes to complete. While all are busy people it was anticipated that this would not be
perceived as an unreasonable request and that a high response rate was possible. A questionnaire could obtain information about their: current situations; teaching backgrounds; teaching practice; and length of experience in working with Aboriginal students. It could also ascertain: the spread of courses educators are involved in teaching; the perceptions they have about students' literacy levels; the perceptions they have of students' motivation and progress; the strategies they find successful or unsuccessful; their needs for professional development and ongoing support.

The researcher was keen to produce a questionnaire which was sufficiently thought provoking in itself so that, even if participants did not ever read the final study report, they would have been made aware of some of the complexities of the reading task for students and they would have had their attention drawn to some useful teaching strategies they may not yet have considered.

3.6 The research instrument

The questionnaire was designed to obtain the desired information and presented to participants in booklet form (Appendix 1). The recommendations about questionnaire surveys by Wiersma (1991, pp. 173-183) proved particularly valuable in its preparation. In line with these recommendations the first page of the booklet consisted of a covering letter acquainting participants with the objectives of the study, describing what it was they had to do and stressing the intention of the researcher to supply them with information of a practical nature which could ultimately be useful to them and their students. The questionnaire itself was clearly set out in four major sections: student details; course details; a text for analysis together with questions about literacy teaching strategies; and participants' personal and professional details.

The section on student details asked participants about the names and focus of the courses they teach, the communities from which students come, their perception of students' motivation to learn English and English literacy and how that is assessed. Information on the actual courses was limited to their title, their duration and the genres of texts
students are expected to read as part of the course. A question about students' home language was also inserted to see if educators made provision for students to use their own language knowledge in any way during lessons. Participants were asked to identify students' degree of motivation, literacy level or progress as 'very high', 'high', 'low' or 'very low'; however, exactly what the terms themselves signified was purposely not defined. In the absence of an instrument of assessment, common to all the institutions represented in the study, it was considered more useful that educators should make their assessment, give the criteria on which they based that assessment and say how they had arrived at this assessment. In this way it would become clear how in fact students' literacy development is currently being assessed.

Undoubtedly the most difficult, and yet potentially the most interesting item for participants was in the section called 'English literacy'. Participants were asked to analyse a short newspaper article and comment on its potential difficulties for their students. First of all, an example of what was being asked for was provided (Appendix 1, p. 3). This was a sentence from another newspaper report in which three types of potential difficulty had been highlighted: a semantic item, a structural item and a grammatical item. Attention was also drawn to the need to make students aware of the wider genre of newspapers as a type of text (which within it, of course, incorporates many different types of text) and the notion that writers position their readers in different ways. Technical terminology, was minimised to avoid intimidating educators.

The article selected for participants to analyse was a piece of six short paragraphs (consisting of one sentence each) excerpted from a longer newspaper article about an Aboriginal business venture. Because the different courses in which adult educators are involved prepare their Aboriginal adult students to work with many different types of text, this piece of text had to be one which was not limited to a particular course yet was authentic and could be expected to hold some interest for Aboriginal readers. It also had to be pitched at a medium level of difficulty. Participants were asked to circle those words or phrases in the text which, in their estimation, would be most likely to cause difficulties for their students. They were to number each of these and on the opposite page to explain why each particular item would cause difficulty. They were then
asked what strategies they had for dealing with the different types of difficulties they had identified. (Participants who felt that a particular word or structure would cause difficulty, but could not say why, were still urged to highlight the problem item.)

The passage was very slightly modified. The link between two ideas, previously unstated, was made explicit by the addition of 'As a result' (line 10) and 'This' was substituted for 'The' in the original text (line 13). This was done to give participants the opportunity to comment on the difficulty of logical connectives and anaphoric (backwards) reference. A fuller description of both texts—the edited text and the full text from which it comes—follows later in this chapter.

After this exercise participants were asked to put in ascending order the factors they believed contributed most to student difficulties. Nine statements were given. The opportunity was available for participants to add a tenth and give it its place in the list. Next, ten language and literacy teaching strategies were listed and participants were asked to indicate which of these they used regularly with students. Some of these were directly related to print, others to the structure of language and texts and others more to the teaching and exploration of ideas. Some would have been familiar to adult educators, especially those with a background in primary teaching; others would not. Every effort was therefore made to name each strategy simply and clearly so that participants could easily grasp what the key idea was. The purpose of listing the strategies was partly to find out what strategies people were in fact using, but also to alert educators as to their potential use. Furthermore, in the introductory letter, participants were invited to ask the researcher for more information about any of the strategies. In the event none did so.

Some of the strategies listed in the questionnaire are classics in the reading tradition, e.g., phonics and word building. Some are from the Breakthrough to Literacy approach, for example, simple deconstruction of the text (cutting up parts of the text and putting them back together again). Also included were cloze (filling in gaps in the text), read-a-long (reading the text while listening to it being read), retelling the text in student's own words (in order to reveal what has been understood), rewriting the text (in order to express the same ideas differently or in simpler/more complex
language). Others are strategies which assist with the semantic or meaning aspect of a text, for example, drawing diagrams or 'mind maps' together, acting out the meaning of words or phrases, manipulating objects to demonstrate relationships between places, people or ideas. And lastly there were strategies which encourage students to detect the bias of the writer, for example, analysing texts at different levels and critiquing the message of a text in addition to simply reading and 'understanding' it.

The next two questions asked participants to describe particular strategies that they themselves had found to be both successful and unsuccessful in teaching English literacy. The last questions in the section on teaching practice asked participants to say whether or not they felt that students were making good progress in English literacy and upon what they based that assessment.

The final section of the questionnaire asked for personal and professional details: gender; length of experience teaching Aboriginal students; professional title, for example, tutor, lecturer or adult educator; teaching background, for example, primary, secondary, adult education, tertiary or untrained; qualifications for teaching in an adult cross-cultural context, for example, ESL, adult literacy; where professional support was obtained and areas of perceived need for professional development.

Altogether the questionnaire featured a range of item types: simple closed form (tick-in-the-box) items; items which required participants to rate given responses in order of importance; items which asked participants to register their opinion by selecting one from a range of given responses; and items which solicited completely open-ended responses. It also included plenty of space for comment, for respondents to supply their own categories if those given were inadequate.

The questionnaire was also designed to present respondents with some food for thought. Educators were challenged to put themselves in the place of students when presented with a text in a foreign language, from another culture, in a medium with which they are less than comfortable. There is also the implication in items 8 and 9 (Appendix 1, p. 2) that, if students are expected to learn to read particular types of text, they must be given the opportunity to study them during the course.
3.7 The text for analysis

The following article from the *Northern Territory News* was selected for educators to analyse.

**JAWOYN PLAN MOVE INTO TOURIST TRADE**

Territory Aborigines are going into business in a big way and look set to become some of the NT economy's main players.

The Jawoyn Association last night announced plans to enter the tourism industry at Katherine in a joint venture with Travel North.

From May 1993 the Jawoyn will hold a 50 per cent stake with Travel North in the camping ground and boat tours in Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park.

As a result the association will buy out the boat tours currently operated by the Queensland-based Australia Frontier Holidays.

This news comes in the wake of a recent announcement that a central Australian Aboriginal group has entered into a joint venture with Toyota car dealership at Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Mitsubishi.

An announcement is also expected at any time that the Jawoyn have entered into a huge joint partnership with a major Territory company to build the Mt Todd Zapopan mine facilities.

*NT News*, P2 (slightly adapted)

Wednesday 28th April, 1993.

A newspaper article was selected primarily, because it was 'neutral' territory, being neither an education text or a health text or a text related to any other particular course. Second, it was selected as being at the level of difficulty expected of the general readership of the popular press. Since the *NT News* is a forum in which community attitudes are both expressed and shaped, it is a level of text to which Aboriginal readers might well aspire. This particular article was selected because it has Aboriginal people as its central players and appears to present them in a positive light.
(However, see a fuller analysis of the discourse in Chapter 5.) It also contains concepts which could be usefully expanded upon as general background knowledge for community members for they relate to business and tourism.

The text is structured in one-sentence paragraphs. This appears to be typical NT News format—syntactically simple (subject-verb-object construction) yet lexically dense, for example 'huge joint partnership with a major Territory company'. It is not highly cohesive, therefore it was slightly adapted by this researcher to include two cohesive markers—'As a result' at the beginning of paragraph four (previously omitted) and 'This' at the beginning of paragraph five (previously 'The' news). The full text follows.

JAWOYN PLAN MOVE INTO TOURIST TRADE
by Frank Alcorta

Territory Aborigines are going into business in a big way and look set to become some of the NT economy's main players.

The Jawoyn Association last night announced plans to enter the tourism industry at Katherine in a joint venture with Travel North.

From May 1993 the Jawoyn will hold a 50 per cent stake with Travel North in the camping ground and boat tours in Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park.

The association will buy out the boat tours currently operated by the Queensland-based Australia Frontier Holidays.

Nitmiluk National Park Board of Management chairman Robert Lee said last night that the deal, to be financed through a commercial loan to the Jawoyn, was 'proof that the Jawoyn people are committed to economic development that will benefit the entire region'.

He said it has long been the ambition of the Jawoyn to break away from the days of enforced dependence on handouts (and) the days when Aboriginal people were thought to be good for nothing.
'We've worked hard for this. It's a great day for the Jawoyn people, and a great day for the Katherine region,' Mr Lee said.

He said everyone currently employed at Nitmiluk had been offered a job.

The Jawoyn, through Nitmiluk Pty Ltd, are expected to be able to pay back the commercial loan from ATSIC over five years, including a buy out of shares that will be held by ATSIC in years three to five. From year six onwards, the Jawoyn will own their share outright.

Expected

This news comes in the wake of a recent announcement that a central Australian Aboriginal group has entered into a joint venture with Toyota car dealership at Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Mitsubishi.

The Aboriginal group is the Central Australian Aboriginal Investment Corporation.

An announcement is also expected at any time that the Jawoyn have entered into a huge joint partnership with a major Territory company to build the Mt Todd Zapopan mine facilities.

Because survey participants had only an abbreviated version of the text, they were not in a position to fully analyse the discourse. A detailed analysis of the complete text, including the discourse, is presented later in Chapter 5.

3.8 Field procedures, instructions to subjects

Some seventy-five educators employed by the Department of Education, Batchelor College, Nungalinya College, the Institute for Aboriginal Development and the Northern Territory University were surveyed. Permission to undertake the study in institutions controlled by the Northern Territory Department of Education was obtained from senior officers in the Evaluation, Research and Assessment Unit of the Curriculum and Assessment Division of the Department of Education.
Clearance to approach potential participants was obtained by letter from key personnel in each institution involved (Appendix 2-6). A copy of the questionnaire was attached in each case.

The research was welcomed by senior lecturers at Batchelor College. The focus on literacy was thought to be timely given that the College had just commissioned external consultants to make recommendations about the assessment of students' literacy. As a result of this interest, the researcher was invited to distribute the questionnaire on a particular day when all the tutors and lecturers from the Education, Health and Community Studies faculties would be present at the college. Initially it had been intended to take a small 'sampling' of the practices of the adult educator population, for example, some 15-20 people. However, the invitation to distribute the questionnaire more widely allowed a more comprehensive coverage than originally planned.

The research into literacy issues was also welcomed by senior staff at NTOC who enthusiastically gave their consent to adult educators being approached. Co-operation from Nungalinya College and the Centre for Aboriginal and Islander Studies was equally forthcoming. Included in the sample were 10 out of a possible 96 DEET tutors who support students across all courses and institutions. The decision to sample this population was made because there were simply too many to include all of the tutors in the study. The sample included representatives of a range of different courses; a range of teaching backgrounds, located in both the north and the south of the Territory; and both males and females.

The letter which accompanied the questionnaire (Appendix 1, p. (i)) thanked participants for agreeing to take part in the study and stressed the fact that the study was primarily concerned to assist them in their work. It also encouraged participants to return questionnaires even if they were unable to complete them. Before being distributed, each questionnaire was marked with a code identifying the institution, the faculty and the participant. This was to facilitate the mailing out of any reminder notices that might be necessary. A stamped addressed envelope was included for its return. Because all the lecturers and tutors had gathered together in College for an intensive workshop, it was possible to make the initial contact with many of the educators in person. Educators from the other
institutions were contacted by telephone, when their approval to post out the questionnaire was sought. Some were contacted through a regional coordinator. Participants were given three to four weeks in which to complete the questionnaire. After the date nominated for its return had passed, a reminder letter was issued (See Appendix 7) and the return date extended for another two weeks. After that date had passed those who had still not returned the questionnaire were contacted by telephone.

3.9 Data collection

After a slow beginning, the response to the survey was excellent. Fifty two of the seventy-five questionnaires distributed were in fact returned. This 69.3 per cent rate of return may have been due to a number of factors. The researcher was known to many of the respondents on a personal and/or professional basis. Respondents may have been genuinely pleased to contribute to research in the area. The offer of The Black Perspective may have been tempting to some, especially those new to the field. The reminder notice avoided a note of reproach and acknowledged the busy schedules participants had to meet in their professional lives. Two educators, in particular, commented on the thoroughness of the approach and the preparation which was evident in the compilation of the questionnaire (White, Miller, 1993, pers. comm.).

3.10 Data analysis/Processing

When all of the questionnaires had been received, each one was numbered from 1 to 52. Focus questions were constructed to guide the analysis of the data; for example, 'Who are these educators?'. To answer this question the responses to items 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 were examined. A data base was set up using Filemaker Pro™. Key fields were created for the relevant information: gender, years of experience in working with Aboriginal people, role, teaching background, ESL qualifications and adult literacy qualifications. (These were all possible variables which could be looked at later in conjunction with the responses to other questions; for example does having ESL qualifications make a difference to how respondents tackled this item? and 'Is there a pattern in what educators
who have worked over many years with Aboriginal people are saying about successful strategies?)

To answer the question 'What are these educators' perceptions of students' attitudes to literacy?' items 4 and 5 were analysed, and so on. As each question was posed and the appropriate items in the questionnaire identified, a new layout was created and new fields were added. Each layout was given a name that identified it easily—'current literacy levels', 'student progress', 'need for professional assistance' and so on. If respondents had been invited to comment on any item, a comment field was created and the data entered. These became the source of pertinent quotations to illustrate findings.

Each new layout included a field for the questionnaire number. Any other field(s) which might reveal significant connections, for example, ESL training or years of experience in working with Aboriginal people, were also brought across from the master previous layout. As each new layout was part of the original document, the information in earlier fields which had been brought across, appeared automatically. Only the new fields required data to be entered.

Each was a task that could be managed relatively quickly and yet, at the end of it, a discrete body of knowledge about the survey population was available. This turned out to be an eminently satisfying way to work with the data—in manageable amounts, in response to a particular question and across the whole body of data. All except items 11 and 12, which related to the text analysis, were tackled in this way.

The data was specially coded. Columnar layouts were created for printing. These made it easier for the researcher to physically scan the information. Each of these layouts was given a number. When a respondent is quoted in this study first of all the layout from which the quotation came, is cited. To this is added the questionnaire number of that particular respondent. For example, the following comment comes from layout 12 and is from questionnaire number 42:

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3) I am grateful to my friend Dr Carolyn Fenwick-Jackson for her suggestions about the process of data analysis.
What 'business' is in this context, and what 'a big way' means in terms of this, needs discussion (12:42).

The analysis of item 11 in the questionnaire (respondents' analysis of the text) was commenced in response to the focus question 'What kind of analysts are these educators?'; that is, 'What are they aware of in this text and what are they not aware of?' A new layout was created. As each questionnaire was examined it became clear that this particular educator was aware of certain textual difficulties. A field was created for each 'awareness'. New fields were added, one by one, as a new type of difficulty was identified by a participant, however vague or indirect the reference to it might be. A comment box added to each one allowed the explanation given by the respondent to be entered.

Gradually some 27 'awarenesses' were identified, for example, 'awareness of conceptual density', 'awareness of idiomatic usage', 'awareness of the way in which the reader is being positioned', 'awareness of logical relationships in the text' and so on. These were later grouped together into broader categories and a new layout created for each, 'awareness of students' knowledge background', 'awareness of difficulties related to English usage', 'awareness of semantic (ideational) difficulties in the text', 'awareness of difficulties related to the nature of written text', 'awareness of the rhetorical nature of text, or critical literacy'. Again, columnar layouts proved suitable for physically scanning the data and drawing conclusions.

Once the data had been summarised a copy was sent to each respondent with the request that they read it and assess whether it represented their responses accurately and interpreted them fairly. They were invited to contact the researcher if they had any reservations about the data or if they wanted to add information or alter their response in any way (Appendix 8). They were encouraged to offer further comment of any kind before the data was finally presented. For participants' interest and information, a copy of the recommended strategies for teaching literacy from the literature, which forms the final part of Chapter 2, was also included in

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4 I am indebted to Ely White for her assistance in formulating this question which came out of our discussions.

5 Before this, the researcher had shared her own analysis of the text with a group of colleagues who had confirmed, refined or augmented it in various ways. This made it possible to see what the educators in the survey were 'intuiting' in the text, although not necessarily describing with any exactness.
this package. Since no responses were received, either in support of, or contradicting the findings, this researcher must assume that the analysis of the data from each individual found acceptance.

Data obtained for the purposes of the study will be safely stored for a period of five years during which time participants may be granted permission to access the documents at any time, with the proviso that the anonymity of other survey respondents will be protected.

3.11 Limitations of the method selected

The pitfalls of using questionnaires as instruments for data collection are well documented (Wiersma, 1991; Mason & Bramble, 1989); these include: their impersonal nature; the typically poor response rate; the lack of personal satisfaction or reward for participants; questionnaires that are too long and tiring for respondents to complete; questionnaires that are too short to allow the researcher to obtain useful data; the hypothetical nature of many questions; the use of vague, ambiguous or leading questions which result in vague, unusable or biased answers; the inclusion of questions that are long, involved and confusing; the use of terminology unfamiliar to respondents and so on. The researcher in the current study set out to minimise these effects. The practical outcomes of the research project for participants, other colleagues and students were emphasised. A more tangible reward was offered in the form of a personal copy of The Black Perspective, an annotated bibliography of reading material by, about and for Aboriginal people authored by the researcher. Participants by and large were contacted in person, either face-to-face or by telephone. This was not always possible however. In some instances the official contact person in the region or institution volunteered to approach the others with whom they worked and issue questionnaires to those interested in taking part. To have overridden this offer would have been discourteous.

In the questionnaire itself, the number of questions was pared down to twenty-six, most of which could be answered quite quickly. All questions were kept brief and expressed in plain English. Each page displayed plenty

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6Permission to use copies of The Black Perspective for this purpose was obtained from the Director, Equal Opportunities, Curriculum & Assessment, NT Department of Education.
of white space. Mostly questions asked participants to reflect on their own personal experience. The one hypothetical situation participants were asked to address was the analysis of the text from the perspective of their students.

Because of the potential difficulty for some participants of this item and its related questions, they were encouraged to return questionnaires even if they had been unable to complete them. This was to allow information which would contribute to the profile of the group to be obtained at least. Non-completion of the text-analysis item by a percentage of the group would be considered as important information for the profile.

The questionnaire itself underwent several modifications and additions as it was firstly critiqued by a professional researcher who is a personal friend of this researcher and was then piloted by an ESL specialist, two ex-DEET tutors and two current Batchelor College lecturers. Only one question did not eventually yield worthwhile or usable information. Item 20, which asked for participants' previous teaching location, proved to be redundant when analysing the data.

Only two replies were received from Aboriginal people out of a possible six or seven, confirming the perception of the interviewer in the Christie study that the questionnaire approach is not suitable for Aboriginal people. This meant that the few Aboriginal educators within the orbit of the study were excluded. In future, as more Aboriginal adult educators are appointed a different methodology will be required.

It is possible that this study attempts to do too much—to survey current practice and give pointers on the teaching of English literacy. This meant that the questionnaire was not straightforward. Included was a task that many educators would have found difficult. Not a few would have felt embarrassed at their difficulty with the items relating to the text analysis, and, as a consequence, may have been reluctant to return the questionnaire.

Non-response might also indicate that the topic did not have top priority, given the many other extraneous events in the lives of students and educators. It might also indicate that many educators considered their
students' levels of literacy to be so far below that of the text under consideration that they saw no point in pursuing the exercise.

By limiting the survey to educators and not students, it is merely educators' *perceptions* of students' motivation and students' difficulties that is obtained. However teacher perception is not an insignificant factor in student progress.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research methodology which was selected for this study into the teaching of English literacy to adult Aboriginal students in non-urban contexts of the Northern Territory. In Chapter 4 the data which provides a profile of educators and their current practice are summarised and an analysis made.
CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter describes the data-gathering instrument used in this study and the reasons for its selection. This chapter profiles the educators who were sampled, including their current approaches to English/literacy teaching/learning. Educators' own discourse is then viewed according to Discourse theory and Critical literacy theory to see what constructions are being made: of students, of literacy and of educators themselves.

4.2 Who are these educators? What is their professional background?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of subjects who responded to the questionnaire</th>
<th>Workplace</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Batchelor College</td>
<td>Batchelor, Alice Springs, and all regional centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Northern Territory Open College (NTOC)</td>
<td>Darwin and regional centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Nungalinya College</td>
<td>Darwin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Centre for Aboriginal and Islander Studies (CAIS), NTU</td>
<td>Darwin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Part-time employees of the Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET)</td>
<td>Communities in all regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Resource Centre</td>
<td>Outside Darwin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total: 52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Educators in the study and their employing institutions.

Fifty-two educators are represented in this study. A majority (25) are college lecturers from either Batchelor College (19), or the Centre for Aboriginal and Islander Studies (CAIS) at the Northern Territory University (3), or Nungalinya Theological College (3). Two of the group

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<sup>1</sup>This number includes 2 tutors who tutor students for both Batchelor and NTOC courses
are Aboriginal educators. The remainder of the respondents are Batchelor College tutors (10), DEET tutors (5) and adult educators (9). A further two are involved in more than one course and one is a Resource Centre coordinator. Nineteen of these educators are male and thirty three are female. Of the 52 educators, just under half (24) have some experience in primary education. The remainder come from a background in secondary and tertiary education and TAFE. Twelve have qualifications in teaching English as a Second Language, while another six have undertaken some study in the area. Seven of the group have done some training in adult literacy and another four claim partial qualifications. Two of the DEET tutors are not formally trained.

In total these educators represent an average of many years of experience working with Aboriginal people. Two thirds of the group have been involved in the field of Aboriginal education for at least four years—half of these have more than ten years experience; of these, six educators have more than fifteen years experience and five have more than twenty. The remaining third of the sample have come into Aboriginal education more recently, averaging two to three years, with a few very recent arrivals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of years in Aboriginal education</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20+</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Educators' years of experience in Aboriginal education.

While it is possible to assume that the number of years an educator has worked in the field of Aboriginal education indicates a knowledge of the contextual and interpersonal features of operating successfully in these contexts, it cannot be assumed that this experience necessarily implies expertise in the teaching of English literacy.
4.3 What courses are educators involved in teaching?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The providers</th>
<th>The courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Batchelor College</td>
<td>Associate Diploma of Teaching Stages 1, 2 and 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Education Studies</td>
<td>Diploma of Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Associate Diploma of Education (Adult)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Health Studies</td>
<td>Enabling Course in Health Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Certificate in Health Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Associate Diploma in Health Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Community Studies</td>
<td>Certificate in Office Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Associate Diploma of Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre for Australian Language Learning</td>
<td>English/Language contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory Open College (NTOC)</td>
<td>Certificate in Access to Education and Employment (ACCESS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nungalinya College</td>
<td>Certificate in Theology</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Diploma in Theology</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Certificate in Bicultural Life Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Centre for Aboriginal and Islander Studies (CAIS)</td>
<td>Certificate in General Studies</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. The courses in which educators and students are involved.

The educators in this particular study are involved in a range of courses. Although literacy is the primary focus of only a very few, the development of students' literacy is a crucial element of most. Table 3 sets them out in detail.

4.4 How do educators assess their students' motivation and literacy levels?

Most educators perceive their students' motivation to learn both English and English literacy as high. The reasons they give for this assessment are varied. 'I want to learn more English' is the first answer most commonly given in reply to the question, "What do you want to learn?" (3:23). ‘When students are asked to identify an area of need, English is always a priority’ (3:32). 'A constant request after module workshops is for more literacy training' (3:48). Some educators refer to the frustration students experience because of their difficulty in understanding and in expressing themselves. 'Students feel restricted by their limited abilities in English'  

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2 When a respondent is quoted in this study first of all the layout from which the quotation came (3) is cited. To this is added the questionnaire number of that particular respondent, in this case (23).
They can do the technical aspects, but wish to learn the English so they understand and control/manage a situation' (3:45).

Other educators emphasise that this desire for English and/or literacy is highly specific, depending upon the student's purpose. It is not a desire to learn English per se. 'They are after job-related English’. 'English is necessary to become qualified—seen as a means to an end—necessary to complete their course, but not of great value otherwise' (3:19). '[They] want to learn to read the bible etc., but not very interested in the structure of English per se’ (3:27). This view is also borne out in the overall picture of students as learners who take a very concrete and task-specific view of learning. Others cite, as evidence of strong motivation, positive attitudes to classwork, willingness to seek assistance, and attendance at classes.

While they may assess students' motivation to learn English as high, educators regard the current English literacy proficiency of most students as generally low or very low. This is true across all courses and institutions in this survey. The exceptions to this are a few students who have had some secondary schooling out of their community. Educators themselves correlate literacy levels directly with students' years of schooling, and to where that schooling took place; that is, in a local community school, in an urban secondary school, or interstate boarding school. 'Broad range—[it] depends on where they have been to school. Boarding school students seem to have higher levels of literacy in English' (4:33). 'Students who have been through secondary education have a higher level of English literacy proficiency than other students' (4:30). But even if students have attended secondary education there can still be problems. 'Huge gaps. Far below year 10 even though "attained" this at school' (4:45).

Many commented that the more 'remote' and traditional the community from which students come, the lower their levels of English literacy tend to be. 'Students from more isolated communities tend to demonstrate lower competence in their English language proficiencies' (4:3). Limited experience of formal schooling as well as the perceived irrelevance of literacy, were identified as key factors in low literacy levels for this group of students. 'Motivation levels vary depending on students' perceived relevance of English in their day-to-day encounters ... [The] need to use
written English is not always great in more remote communities' (3:39). This sentiment was frequently expressed.

4.5 What literacy assessment strategies are educators currently using?

The ways in which educators currently assess students' literacy levels are varied. Most educators teach courses where assessment procedures are built in to each unit; however, these do not necessarily assess students' English language or literacy skills in any depth, but rather their ability to complete tasks. Some educators use as their benchmark the information about students' educational levels formally ascertained on entry to the course. A few devise their own more formal procedures—checklists for literacy skills (based on those of the local primary school) (4:29), developing criteria for written work and applying these criteria to texts produced early in the course and then later (4:13). One educator makes use of the Adult Literacy And Numeracy (ALAN) scales (4.3) to place students or trainees in programs. At CAIS, formal end-of-term examinations provide some of the data for assessment (4:36). One educator, aware that his/her assessment of students is relative and subjective, asks a colleague to mark students' assignments. This provides a degree of moderation (5:10).

In general, educators' assessment of students' literacy levels is currently being made on an informal basis, using their own intuition as proficient speakers of English, their years of teaching experience, their observations of student performance and their marking of student assignments.

4.6 What texts do educators expect students to read during their courses?

It is evident from the responses of educators in this study that students are expected to read a wide variety of texts in the course of their training. When and how the teaching and the reading take place was not ascertained by the questionnaire. In retrospect, it would also have been helpful for the purposes of this study to ask educators to assess the percentage of time students spend reading during their course as opposed to the percentage of time they spend writing.
Educators prepare students to read these texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educators prepare students to read these texts</th>
<th>No of educators</th>
<th>Students engage with these texts over the period of the course</th>
<th>No of educators</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Minutes of meetings</td>
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<td>Other:</td>
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<td>• short stories</td>
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<td>• road signs</td>
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<td>• essays and formal assignments</td>
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<td>• translations of old time stories.</td>
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Table 4. The different texts students are prepared by educators to read and those texts which are read as part of the course.

There is some discrepancy between the number of texts educators say they teach students to read and the number of texts they say students are required to read. It is unclear why this is so and if this is an accurate reflection of reality, students appear disadvantaged in some instances.

4.7 What successful English literacy teaching strategies have educators developed?

Forty-three of the fifty-two respondents described strategies for teaching English/literacy which they had found successful with students. Some described several, others just one or two. Most of the teaching strategies they identify are of a global, rather than a specific, nature. That is, they seem to be those strategies which allow students to work and learn
collaboratively, to use the language resources they already have, and to contextualise new learning, either by fitting it into a bigger picture or by relating it to what is already familiar to students. The strategies which are thought to contribute most successfully to the acquisition of English literacy are considered to be those which provide plenty of input and time for discussion in home language or English before expecting written work, and which allow for modelling and scaffolding of English/literacy tasks in order to ensure that students experience success. Educators also report success with strategies which make learning concrete, which relate new knowledge to students' own life experience and which allow them to use the actual tools of the trade, for example, computers. Aboriginal educators in particular, and many others more indirectly, support those strategies which establish good interpersonal relations between teacher and students, thus fostering the development of trust and self confidence.

Eight global strategies emerge. These are:

1. Providing a supportive learning environment for students
2. Developing good interpersonal relationships with students
3. Linking literacy with 'real life'
4. Using a multi-media approach to the teaching of literacy
5. Scaffolding new learning for students
6. Contextualising new learning
7. Starting from the known
8. Using computers

1. Providing a supportive learning environment for students
Recognising the highly collaborative nature of students' relationships with each other as community members, the most experienced educators seek to capitalise on this strength in the classroom. They recognise that 'a collaborative approach is essential—students working together, interacting' (6:38). These allow students to work in groups where 'they discuss things and teach each other' (6:9), where 'the more capable students can help the weaker ones' (6:7) and where they become 'clear in their own mind' by 'talking in first language before writing/talking in English' (6:30). It is also where 'they develop texts' (6:24) and where they 'conference in language/English to negotiate a story' (6:42).
2. Developing good interpersonal relationships with students
One Aboriginal educator is insistent that 'If there are not good personal relations between teacher and students, work won't be really successful' (7:31). Only two other educators specifically identify strategies for building relationships as being of primary importance—they cite 'humour' (6:16) and 'developing trust and self-confidence' (6:41). However, many of the strategies referred to by other respondents do, in fact, imply the fostering of good interpersonal relations between teacher and students because they involve ways in which students can be made to feel 'safe' and supported in the learning environment and where their experience and cultural background are acknowledged, valued and used as a resource.

3. Linking literacy with 'real life'
Some educators describe a successful teaching/learning situation as one in which 'the student works with real texts and genres that she or he wants to know about' (6:28). Literacy teaching can include 'working with personal correspondence of students ... financial statements, things that directly affect them' (6:7), 'form filling' and 'answering letters received by students' (6:39, 40). Certainly educators working in a one-to-one teaching situation are in a position to match their assistance more closely to the needs of individual students.

4. Using a 'multimedia' approach to the teaching of literacy
An Aboriginal educator of twenty years experience states 'I would like to continue experimenting more with music, drama and art. English literacy with Aboriginal people won't work, without proper attention to these areas' (7:31). This educator clearly sees the need for a multimedia approach to the teaching of any new learning for Aboriginal students. This is possibly because she perceives it as being in tune with the previous learning experience of students. It is also very sound educational practice. A few others acknowledge the usefulness of role play but none appear to recognise the potential benefits of a more multi-media approach.

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This is borne out by the comments of a group of Aboriginal educators at a workshop attended by the researcher. The group made the point strongly that even the best possible strategy would not work if there was not a good relationship between teacher and student (Scott, Tungatalum & Gaykamangu, 1991, pers. comm.).
5. Scaffolding new learning for students

Educators with long experience in working with Aboriginal students also strongly affirm the need for support and scaffolding to enable students to experience success with English literacy. In fact most of the specific descriptions of classroom practice provided by educators relate to this overall strategy. In the context of teaching English literacy they provide this support or scaffolding in a number of ways: by providing 'sufficient time for discussion about texts' (6:1, 2); by giving students plenty of opportunity for oral work in order to prepare them more effectively for written work (6:1)—'[No strategy] will really work or have long term results unless there is plenty of oral work first' (6:31).

Scaffolding can take the form of: '[teacher and students] taking it in turns to read the text' (6:46); different groups concentrating on one part of a text then explaining it to the others until the whole 'jigsaw' is assembled (6:18); 'brainstorming' ideas, then grouping similar ideas under a heading in preparation for later written work (6:20).

The actual writing task is scaffolded by providing models for students of finished products or texts (6:46), providing focus questions which help students address a literacy task (6:24), modelling the writing process with students as a group (6:32) whether this is by constructing a text with their students' suggestions (6:34, 24, 26) or by editing the text of other students (6:24). Conferencing with students over a piece of written work on a one-to-one basis by 'analysing students' rough drafts to locate and improve errors/problems' (6:2) is a way which allows educators to concentrate more successfully on students' individual needs (6:2, 37). One educator scaffolds the evaluation process for students and supports independence by providing them with 'checklists' (6:6) so that they can go over their work and check so see if they have met requirements.

6. Contextualising the learning for students

Providing the 'big picture' for students is a way of enabling them to fit new learning into a wider context. One educator does this by taking students from a picture of the whole to an examination of the parts, then back to the whole again (6:16). Some others do it by anticipating difficulties and providing students with prior knowledge needed to understand a particular passage (6:36): by describing the overall meaning of the text in
order to give them some reference points while they are reading it (6:22),
by describing as clearly as possible, and in as many different ways as
necessary, the context in which a text is set (6:46), by providing glossaries of
terms (6:21), and by encouraging students to keep their own dictionaries
(6:4).

7. Starting from the known
Educators are conscious of the need to relate new learning to prior
experience. 'I try to teach skills within a relevant context at all times'
(6:38). One educator finds that working with texts produced by someone
students know or are related to, can be more motivating as well as being at
a more appropriate level of difficulty. 'I use literacy materials that are set
in familiar contexts—previous students' assignments—as reading
material or models of what is expected in a writing task (6:46). Others
experience success by 'explaining new words/phrases in known language,
relating to known situations as much as possible' (6:45), by 'relating
content or meaning back to day-to-day life experiences of students or
community (6:2), by continual 'reference to first language' (6:10), by
'reference to first culture' (6:10, 11, 16), by initially 'developing texts with
students about the immediate world around us' (6:25, 39) and by 'using
literacy for real purposes' (6:39, 40).

8. Using computers
A few educators successfully incorporate the use of computers in literacy
lessons: for conferencing students about their work, (6:1, 9); as a help with
grammar, spelling and sequencing (6:16); to write up second drafts (6:6).
This allows students to use the actual 'tools of the trade' and seems to
provide a high degree of motivation.

4.8 What specific English/literacy teaching strategies have educators
found successful for use with texts?

A few educators cite more specific strategies which they use with texts.
These have been grouped into:
1. Practice in writing
2. Reading comprehension strategies
3. Dictogloss—a writing strategy
4. Working with the grammatical structures of the text

1. Practice in writing

For those students who need to develop the technical skills of writing and to build up their self confidence, one educator (6:17) is currently trialling a strategy known as 'Speed Copying' (McCormack & Pancini, 1992). Students spend no longer than 20 minutes every day copying a particular text of interest or relevance. They copy the same text for several days. This is to demonstrate to students the greater accuracy and speed they are developing. The theory behind this technique is that copying provides a non-threatening framework within which students can gradually improve their facility with writing, moving away from a pre-occupation with individual letters towards a focus on the larger, more holistic units of text, phrases and clauses. As a result of regular practice the details of letter formation, spelling, punctuation and "little words" are gradually automated and so are no longer taking the reader's energy away from the more important task of making higher level meanings.

2. Reading comprehension strategies

One educator uses junior secondary and upper primary texts which are relevant, which are at appropriate levels of difficulty and which also have an adult interest/focus (6:17).

Predicted substantiated silent discourse reading (PSSDR) is a strategy used successfully by two highly experienced educators (6:12, 24) and adapted as necessary. This is a strategy in which meaning is foremost. It encourages students to concern themselves with the overall meaning of a longer section of discourse rather than to seek meanings initially at the paragraph level or at the sentence level. The crucial elements seem to be: organising for students to work in small groups; making use of the title, the illustrations and the first paragraph to help readers predict the central idea of the whole text. Phase two is the construction of questions about each of the major parts of the text which will guide students to the central idea of each paragraph. Groups must substantiate their answers with reference to particular parts of the text. A full description of the strategy is provided in Sloan and Latham (1981).
Discussion-aided analytical reading (DAAR) (6:12) is closely related to the above and is described in the same publication. Initially the context of the text is researched—its geographic location, its historical background, author detail and so on. Predictions are made about the text as before. Several questions are set in writing which direct students to different parts of the text. Students read together 'silently', jot down brief answers and page references. As each group reports back on their answer to a particular question, again justifying their answer with reference to the text, a summary of the information is constructed by a recorder. Only those items deemed significant by the whole group are included in the summary. This text can form the basis for other work.

For two other educators retelling/rewriting a text is a particularly useful way to check on conceptual understandings (6:3, 17).

3. Dictogloss—a writing strategy
Dictogloss is a writing activity recommended by another educator (6:28). In this approach the teacher or other confident reader reads a short piece of text to the students while they listen. During the reading the students jot down a few keywords or phrases. They then have to attempt, individually or in groups, to reconstruct the text. After students have finished writing they are shown the original text and asked to compare their version with the original. This is then followed by an analysis of their text and discussion about corrections. Dictogloss is a very useful strategy with students who already have fairly good writing skills. It is also good preparation for note-taking.

4. Working with the grammatical structures of a text
A few educators describe activities which make students aware of the structures within the text: physically cutting and pasting their ideas into an essay style with students (6:32); analysing a text for particular grammatical items (6:32); explaining, and giving students the opportunity to practise the different ways ideas can be joined together in English (sentence combining) (6:45). For more advanced students it can be helpful to 'analyse sentence structure and have students rearrange so that the sense is maintained' (6:45).
4.9 What strategies do educators consider to be unsuccessful?

The teaching strategies that educators in this study identify as successful are those which contribute to the creation of a supportive learning environment in which Aboriginal adult students feel safe and are motivated to continue their learning. Conversely, unsuccessful strategies are those which place students in an 'unsafe' position. The unsuccessful strategies fall into the following categories:

1. Treating adults as children
2. According insufficient respect to the social position of students
3. Insufficient participation by students in the teaching/learning context
4. Expecting 'uncultural' behaviour of students
5. Providing insufficient input/scaffolding
6. Failing to contextualise language/literacy activities for students
7. Overloading students with new information

1. Treating adults as children
Activities which do not recognise the adult status of students are unsuccessful: 'any strategy that makes them feel they are being babied or treated like school kids' (7:22), 'giving students children's texts to read is a bit humiliating—especially for men. Teacher ed students don't seem to mind so much' (7:22). Activities which are not meaningful for students are equally unsuccessful. Students clearly do not engage with inappropriate topics or materials—'theme or subject matter not relevant or meaningful to students' (7:23) or inability to see the purpose of an activity—"dry bones" teaching ... uninteresting texts' (7:6, 7), 'inappropriate or boring movies' (7:17) 'anything they consider boring'4 (7:19), 'using materials [students] consider irrelevant or not culturally sensitive' (7:28).

2. According insufficient respect to the social position of students
Activities which threaten the development and maintenance of good interpersonal relationships and make the learning environment 'unsafe' for students need to be avoided. 'Tasks that place students in situations of potential shame/embarrassment are not helpful' (7:30). These can include,

4A colleague who has lived and worked for many years with Aboriginal people commented that a more accurate word would be 'meaningless' (Reaburn, 1993, pers. comm.).
when not handled sensitively: 'reading in front of others—some students tend to become shamed or shy' (7:30); 'shaming students by letting their fellow students know that someone didn’t understand something' (7:36); 'role play when not for a specific purpose' (7:39) or when students are too shy (7:40); 'blunt questioning of an individual student' (7:25); 'seeking an individual response in a group setting' (7:39); and negotiating or modelling texts with large groups where input is expected (7:42).

3. **Insufficient participation by students in the teaching/learning context**
   Lack of student involvement in an activity and too much reliance on the verbal mode is also unlikely to meet with success. This was evidenced by comments such as 'me talking too much ... they prefer activity based learning' (7:3); 'chalk and talk for much more than ten minutes' (7:16, 23).

4. **Expecting 'uncultural' behaviour of students**
   Some of the time in class students are expected to behave in a culturally inappropriate manner; for example, working alone. 'Independent study' is problematic because '... learning is a communal activity mainly' (7:7). The conflict between behaviour which is culturally valued and behaviour which is not culturally valued can lead to resistance on the part of the learner, and frustration on the part of the teacher. It is unrealistic, comments one educator, to 'suggest they read at home—camp situation is not conducive' (7:9). However, another educator points out that certain activities which may not necessarily be comfortable or cultural are essential for language learning; for example, taking risks. She points out that while '[students] prefer silence', silence is 'not helpful for language learning' (7:38). There is clearly a conflict between the behaviours students are expected to adhere to in the interpersonal sphere of their lives and those they must learn to exhibit for much more of the time if they are to become literate in English.

5. **Providing insufficient input/scaffolding**
   Included in this category are situations which lead to students failing because of lack of scaffolding and support: the use of 'texts set too far above ability level (7:6); 'independent completion of task without sufficient input and clarification first' (7:2); 'assignments without careful group preparation' (7:24); 'written exercises without copious oral and group practice prior to individual work' (7:24); having students write before they
discuss their ideas and order their thoughts' (7:32); and 'just handing out readings and expecting students to read silently on their own' (7:46, 34).

6. Failing to contextualise language/literacy activities for students
Also unsuccessful are activities which are decontextualised (7:36). These include 'out of context exercises' (7:7); 'straight grammar exercises' (7:16); and 'abstract or isolated language that does not have strong connection or context' (7:28).

7. Overloading students with new information
Since the language of the classroom is English or mostly English, one or two educators are acutely aware of the danger of overload in a foreign language. This may result from 'using too many unfamiliar terms' (7:16); selecting 'texts that are too long' (7:16); or 'introducing too many English strategies at one time—assuming that students know the intricacies of the English language, e.g., the article on the Jawoyn includes many English strategies, skills, concepts that we as English first speakers take for granted' (7:32).

4.10 How much use do educators make of students' own language and cultural knowledge in the literacy program?

All but seven of the 52 educators involved in the study incorporate the use of students' own language and culture into their programs, to some degree, whenever appropriate. At least one of these seven teaches in a one-to-one situation where student and teacher converse in English. In spite of the widespread inclusion of students' own language in the classroom, its use, with one exception, is spontaneous, rather than systematic. It is not so much a deliberate decision on the part of educators but rather, as one educator notes wryly, 'essentially because you can't stop them' (9:48). Students use their languages most commonly to clarify the meanings of English words or concepts with each other, to gain assistance or advice from each other during a task and to discuss issues prior to writing their ideas down (usually in English).

One college lecturer describes how she incorporates other languages into the teaching of English specifically to enable students to get a clearer
understanding of grammatical categories. 'I begin with an example of a sentence in English and ask students to translate that sentence into their own language(s). I also translate that English sentence into an [Aboriginal] Australian language with which I am familiar. (This is so we can all work with a language that is not our first language.) Then I use the sentences to illustrate word classes (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions), syntax and transitivity (subj, verb, obj., indirect obj.) and grammatical relations (NP, VP)' (9:52).

Some educators seek to use students' first language more consciously in their course, for example, by ascertaining the technical terms for Aboriginal concepts of health, by identifying and naming bush medicine, by encouraging students who can, to write in their own language whenever it is appropriate to a given task, for example, health promotion materials for the community. One educator sees students writing in their own language as a potential support to an English literacy program, stating that 'decoding, encoding skills are similar, so advances made in literacy in one language should transfer to the other' (9:19).

One educator acknowledges that showing an interest in students' first language, and displaying a willingness to learn different items as they occur, contributes to the rapport between teacher and student. And in this way 'lessons can become an exchange, rather than one-directional, teacher to student' (9:39).

As part of their courses all Batchelor College students are officially involved in Aboriginal Languages Fortnight once a year. This is a two-week period during which students can learn literacy in their own language, or undertake research into language issues in their community.

4.11 How do educators' assess students' progress?

Asked whether they thought students were making progress in literacy a few educators were enthusiastic. 'Some have gone on to become successful at Batchelor College. Others now have jobs and show increased confidence in their use of English' (5:23). 'Students' confidence in reading and writing is developing. Their ability to express themselves clearly in
reading and writing is also developing (5:24). One educator can clearly identify 'improvement in speed of reading, in writing confidence, in communication of ideas, in amount written, etc' (5:41). Another reports that now students 'are asking questions relating to structure or other cultural considerations' (5:36). Some educators take the pragmatic view that since the course itself provides for more regular intensive practice in speaking, reading and writing English than students have probably ever experienced before, this leads, per se, to a degree of progress in both English and literacy. 'They are learning through more practice and exposure to English, oral and written.' (5:30). 'Literacy development occurs because of the large amount of writing students do and there is improvement for those students with low literacy levels through this practice' (5:32). Improving literacy skills is a consequence of all courses because the students have to practise reading and writing. So, even if the improvement is only small, at least they are improving' (5:22). The contribution made by DEET tutors in this improvement is acknowledged.

Many others are less confident. Progress is certainly easier to observe while students are mastering the technical aspects of reading and writing but after that it is 'a very slow process.' Educators must be prepared to persevere in order to see the fruits of their work with students. 'Have noticed improvement over a 2-3 year time span' (5:9). And while it is acknowledged that for certain students, particularly those in the earlier stages of literacy development, a certain amount of practice is beneficial and consolidates skills, those students who have already progressed beyond this stage need more. 'Those with good literacy levels [i.e., those who are technically proficient]... require specific linguistic development' (5:32).

This tendency to plateau at a certain level of development was commented upon by another educator; 'students reach a certain point and seem to take years to go further, say beyond ASLPR level 3. This is due partly to [lack of] experience with language and partly to [lack of] knowledge of English language culture' (5:16). One educator, of nearly twenty years experience in working with Aboriginal people, maintains that what happens is that '[students] learn to present/display work better, which people mistake for increased literacy' but 'their level of literacy that is, comprehension, does not change significantly from year to year (5:2).
Often, even when the answer to the question is in the affirmative, there is a qualification. 'Yes. But still not the progress you would like to see' (5:37).

Some respondents are reluctant to commit themselves to saying yes or no. 'It varies according to students, their needs and their lives' (5:33). A few cite external factors which impact on students' lives and attendance at classes, as playing a significant role in students' progress with literacy or lack of it. '[A] variety of factors affect progress—community events: ceremonial; funerals; sporting etc; making continuity a problem for some' (5:39). Others refer to students' lack of practice after class. 'Outside formal learning sessions little attempt or effort is made by students to become literate' (3:9). 'There appears little support outside the lesson times to continue practising. There is little written material in the home or elsewhere in the community. [Students] do not read for pleasure or enjoyment' (5:34).

Those who believe that students are making insufficient progress, are critical of a course structure that leaves them, as educators, virtually no time to devote to assisting students to improve their literacy skills. '[There is] minimal time to teach English and so little time to work on appropriate strategies' '...not enough time and focused effort given to literacy.' Another complained of 'an overload of materials to get through, leaving insufficient time to tackle basic literacy problems' (5:15). '[Students] need more concentrated blocks of time to consolidate skills learned' (5:28). '[It] remains one of the major hurdles in our course—not enough time/knowledge devoted to literacy development' (5:21). Educators can see students struggling, but are driven themselves by the imperatives of course requirements. '[Students] get frustrated and downhearted because they can't write what they want. Not enough time and focussed effort is given to literacy' (5:13).

4.12 What reasons do educators give for students' difficulties with literacy?

Many participants commented that, although in fact, all the reasons suggested in the questionnaire had merit, it was an extremely difficult task to prioritise them. Because of this, a few participants graded only those they considered of primary importance, and a few indicated, without
grading, those difficulties they felt were of equal importance. This analysis of the results therefore, is based primarily on those (30) fully graded questionnaires, but the others were used to confirm/disconfirm the responses of the majority. The following table prioritises the difficulties as educators perceive them. The weighting allocated to each is indicated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes of students difficulties with literacy in order of perceived significance</th>
<th>Number of points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Insufficient knowledge of the cultural context of English</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Insufficient knowledge of the field or topic of an English text</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Insufficient knowledge of the genres of English texts</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Insufficient knowledge of the structure of the English language</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Able to 'read' but without understanding</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Difficulties in decoding print</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Insufficient knowledge of the task of the writer</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Previous negative experience with school learning</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Insufficient knowledge of the task of the reader</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Educators' ranking of the possible causes of student difficulty with text.

Lack of knowledge of the field or topic of an English text and its related cultural context, was clearly seen as the most serious difficulty students face in developing literacy in English. Closely following are insufficient knowledge of the structure of the English language, and insufficient knowledge of the different genres of English texts. The ability to read the words but without much understanding came next, which seems logical if, as one educator maintains, this difficulty 'is the result of the others' (10:41). Students' difficulties in decoding print particularly concern some. For a group of these (10) the inability to decode print is of primary concern, particularly those who are working with students from more 'remote' localities. Previous negative experience with literacy is not highly rated by educators as having a major impact upon students' current difficulties. Insufficient knowledge of the task of the reader and of the purpose of the writer also rated lowest among educators' concerns.

A few educators describe other difficulties that they perceive as critical; these include the irrelevance of print literacy in the day-to-day lives of Aboriginal people from non-urban contexts (10: 7, 16, 17, 29): 'For most ACCESS students the exercise (learning to read) is pointless—reading is an activity they never do ... if they would come across a text that would be of value, there would be someone around who could read it to them' (10: 7); insufficient vocabulary knowledge (10:9, 10, 21, 27): 'poor vocabulary
knowledge means a lot of what is read is not really comprehended' (10:9); lack of willingness to reveal that one does not know (10:28, 41): 'many students do not volunteer information on what they understand/don't understand!' (10:28); and knowing how to ask for information on the text without being 'shamed' (10:28).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other causes of difficulty as perceived by Individual educators</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the irrelevance of print literacy in students' lives</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insufficient vocabulary knowledge</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unwillingness on the part of students to reveal a lack of knowledge</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the irrelevance of reading as an activity</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insufficient knowledge on the part of students to be able to ask for help</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no systematic approach to assist students make meaning from a piece of written text</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the gulf between the spoken and written modes of English</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the complexity of texts</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of texts for adults appropriate to ability and culture</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of reading practice</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of confidence, shyness</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Other causes of difficulty suggested by educators.

Two educators mentioned difficulties related more to the reader's task of making meaning, and the foreign nature of written text. The first was a difficulty associated with the reader's task of working systematically to establish the meanings of higher and higher units of a text. It was the difficulty for students of 'running the meaning of words together to get the meaning of the sentence, paragraph etc, big blocks of text' (10:13). The second difficulty related to the 'difference between written English (unfamiliar) and spoken English (familiar), especially professional texts' (10:19).

4.13 What strategies do educators have for dealing with students' difficulties with text

Almost half the participants failed to complete this item. The remainder offered some strategies which they use successfully with students. When combined these cover a wide spectrum, however, most give the impression of being an isolated strategy, rather than part of a systematic approach. Most of those specifically related to text seem to address difficulty with 'content' words. Few strategies address the teaching of English language structures.
1. **Scaffolding**

One educator cites the use of 'a group reading strategy and discussion to create a supportive context for weaker readers' (17:3). Others achieve the same supportive learning environment by reading aloud in small groups (17:16), reading around the table (17:21), and reading along (17:51). One mentioned specific attention being paid to 'phonics, shape of words etc' (17:7). A couple write of providing (or brainstorming) background knowledge (17:22, 30). Another three indicate that they rewrite the original text to make it more accessible if it proves too difficult for students, either on behalf of, or as an exercise with students: 'I rewrite texts if I feel the original is too difficult' (17:21); 'article edited for students to reduce words without loss of meaning' (17:34); 'sometimes it is necessary to rewrite the text as a group negotiated text' (17:22). In some cases this second text then becomes the focus of subsequent activities. Two educators refer to a strategy in which small groups of students summarise different paragraphs. These are then linked together by whole group using the same connectives as those in the original article (17:32, 16).

2. **Vocabulary**

Those educators who see insufficient knowledge of vocabulary as a major difficulty draw up vocabulary lists with students, define unfamiliar words in context (and out of the context if appropriate), practise pronunciation and encourage the use of new vocabulary in personal writing (17:12, 16). Another educator builds up glossaries of unfamiliar terms from the text under study (17:21). Several educators mention the use of dictionaries (17:3, 9, 17, 25, 26, 30, 40, 42, 51) to assist with comprehension.

3. **Language study**

Two educators mention getting students themselves to highlight difficulties in the text (17:22, 32) which provides them as teachers with direction and specific teaching points. A few educators cite the direct teaching of grammar—'explain grammar rules' (17:4); 'direct teaching of grammatical points' (17:6); 'sentence structure, word order, clauses' (17:14); say 'job' of word or phrase (17:16); 'explain how words are connected back to other words' (17:30, 7). One educator employs the deliberate strategy of helping students to 'move away from the verb 'to be' plus adjective and develop [their] repertoire of specific and controlling verbs' (17:36). One respondent refers to the technique of 'unpacking' the language of the text.
for or with students: 'condensed language—show fullest expression of relevant verb'\(^5\) (17: 28). Another describes teaching students about the genre—its typical structures, vocabulary and language patterns (17:28).

Two educators use practical, concrete activities to clarify problematic maths concepts in the text (17:40, 14) but there is little reference to practical activity or the use of other media to explain other ideational or relational concepts. 'Explain' and 'discuss' are two frequently used strategies when unfamiliar concepts are encountered, though, as one educator ruefully admits, discussions 'are often very one-sided' (17:7). A few supplement discussion with the use of diagrams (17:25), illustrations (17:28), meaning maps (17:30) and pictures (17:40). One also tries to find analogies which will assist with comprehension (17:35).

Some educators set out to 'expose' students to as much reading of English as possible. This includes 'reading to the group repeatedly' (17: 51); 'trying to expand [students'] horizons by reading newspapers and magazines (17:7); 'weekly comprehension test on newspaper or magazine article to familiarise students with concepts and vocabulary in common use' (17:38); and 'dealing with lots of examples of the genre of text being studied' (17:1, 24).

**4.14 What areas for professional support do educators identify?**

As asked to whom they turn for support on issues relating to the teaching of English literacy, almost all respondents cite their peers and professional colleagues. Two cite literate Aboriginal people in the community, two refer to membership of professional associations, several refer to books, articles and journals, a few name professional colleagues in specialist or advisory roles, linguists, advisers in ESL, adult or Aboriginal education, at least one is in the process of gaining further qualifications in the area and others have included units on ESL, adult education or adult literacy in further study.

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\(^5\)This can be a very useful activity for students to see how tightly packed embedded clauses can be 'unpacked' and expanded into a less formal style nearer to spoken language. The reverse process is equally valuable as a language teaching strategy.
In spite of whatever help they are able to obtain in the above ways, the majority of educators feel they need more assistance in various aspects of teaching literacy. The information they desire ranges from 'all aspects of English literacy teaching' (11: 8, 24, 23, 29, 37, 43), to 'the particular causes of student difficulties' (11: 32, 41, 46). Some want to know more about teaching the mechanics of literacy: especially 'beginning literacy' (11:4); 'a more formal approach' (11:48); 'the sequencing of a literacy program' (11:12); and 'how to go about upgrading students basic literacy skills' (11:30). These comments are mostly made by educators without the background in literacy teaching that those from a background in primary education have experienced. Others are concerned to learn more about effective English literacy teaching strategies for Aboriginal adult students: 'culturally appropriate techniques and strategies' (11:20, 50); 'cultural considerations which affect learning' (11:39); 'techniques for teaching literacy in a task related way' (11:41); 'activity based learning' (11:3); and 'strategies and resources' (11:19, 20, 42).

Others are becoming interested in 'finding out more about ESL' (11:45) and 'learning an Aboriginal language' (11:36). Some want to learn about: 'critical literacy' (11:17); 'linguistic analysis' (11:32); 'academic English' (11:38); 'discourse differences and how these affect learning and effective teaching' (11:38); and 'the use of media technology' (11:34). Another would like to see developed 'a reasonable diagnostic tool [to ascertain students' literacy levels] that fits in with curriculum material and could be used throughout the study program' (11:46). Two are concerned with how best to incorporate the teaching of literacy into already established courses (11:13, 18). Yet another wants to investigate ways to motivate students to work at home and thus make reading and writing practice more intensive (11:9). Another wishes to find ways of utilising students' knowledge of the orthography of their first language in order to lead them to reading in English (11:10).

One highly experienced educator articulates the dilemma educators face: 'how to build the social, contextual basis for students' understanding of text and production of text; [how to develop] two-way schooling so that the above doesn't destroy what is there, but adds to [it]' (11:24).
4.15 What does this tell us about these educators as English/literacy practitioners?

In this section the discourse of the educators themselves is analysed in relation to some of the theoretical positions detailed in Chapter 2; namely, Discourse theory, Critical literacy, Vygotsky’s theory of learning and the principles and theories of adult education (Ganma).

Before analysing the discourse of educators it is necessary to analyse the discourse of the survey sent out to participants early in the project since this framed much of their response. In the questionnaire literacy was positioned as an entity in itself rather than a practice. Participants were asked about ‘teaching literacy’ and ‘learning literacy’. It assumes there is such a thing as ‘literacy proficiency’. It refers to ‘levels’ of literacy rather than degrees of successful practice. ‘Literate’ is constructed as an attribute (of students) rather than as a way of operating. There is also a construction of students in the options given to respondents (perhaps unavoidable since the focus of the study is on student difficulties) as deficient, having ‘insufficient knowledge’, ‘insufficient understanding’, as having an ‘inability’. These Discourses present in survey questions undoubtedly positioned literacy and students in certain ways for educators. Unvoiced in this same questionnaire, but giving rise to its existence, was an underlying construction of English/literacy teaching in adult Aboriginal non-urban contexts as deficit.

In analysing educators’ responses we might first ask ‘what are some of the discursive resources available to these educators?’ In other words, what language/literacy teaching Discourses appear in their responses which might indicate theoretical positions they may be drawing upon in their work with students? What implications does this have for students?

Certainly few generalisations can be made. The following description is a composite account drawn from the responses of many individual educators and may simply exemplify the lack of any consistent language/literacy teaching Discourse across the field of adult literacy in the Northern Territory at this time. (See comments of Holland et al about the national picture of adult literacy teaching in 2.2.)
What are the discursive resources available to these educators?

Educators allude, by their use of the terms 'conferencing' and 'rough drafts', to the writing-as-process approach to teaching literacy, especially writing, popularised in the early 1980s. When using this approach the teacher facilitates students' writing by discussing it with them on a one-to-one basis—the writer remains the authority. One of the metaphors underlying this approach appears to be that of teacher as coach, as one who draws out innate talent. The 'process' approach has largely gone out of favour, especially in contexts where students do not come from white, middle class 'writing' homes. Critics emphasise the need to teach students explicitly about writing and texts by taking a much more interventionist approach. It appears that some of the educators in this survey still use conferencing students' writing as a strategy, whether this is their only approach or whether it is now simply part of a more explicit teaching approach, it is not possible to say. If it is the former, many students may be getting insufficient support for their writing.

The occurrence of 'genres', 'text/context', 'modelling', 'negotiating texts', 'decoding/encoding' and 'dense lexically' in some educators' discourse suggests they have exposed to the ideas of Systemic linguistics. In the mid-eighties Systemic linguists and teachers collaborated to develop language teaching programs which applied the functional approach to education contexts. This collaboration produced ideas of teacher as authority, as teacher, but at the same time providing strong support for students—by modelling text construction, by scaffolding new learning through involving students increasingly in the process until independence is achieved. The metaphor is one of apprenticeship. The applied Systemic linguistic approach has a strong theoretical base and clearly articulated methodology. Unfortunately, an overemphasis on the form of the different kinds (or genres) of English texts has led to a somewhat formulaic approach. An overemphasis on form is particularly problematic in cross-cultural contexts where English genres have been taken as a guide for describing other languages. Notions of apprenticeship are also problematic in cross-cultural contexts where they are open to allegations of assimilation.

With its emphasis on explicitness this approach, when rigorously adopted, has the potential to provide students with strong structural and practical
support. A critical dimension can also be accommodated within this approach. Unfortunately, it is not clear just how rigorously these educators have adopted its ideas and methodology or how rigidly they are interpreting the teaching of genres.

By referring to 'competence' in literacy, educators are employing the Discourse of employment-related literacy. This is the language of the adult Vocational and Education Training (VET) sector of society, and increasingly the language of education. This Discourse moves us more into the idea of literacy as practice. The focus has moved away from generalised literacy which can be applied in all situations, to task related literacy. This pragmatic view of literacy development certainly fits with educators' construction of students as seeking 'job-related English'. The new language and literacy framework Batchelor College is currently developing (see #2.2) in fact uses competency-based descriptors to assess students' ability to handle the English/literacy aspects of tasks. However, without a unifying framework such as this, and a sound theoretical language/literacy teaching approach which assists students to achieve competencies (and which includes the notion of societal Discourses), there is an ever present danger that the teaching of literacy practices is simply commodified and delivered in discrete, off-the-shelf packaging.

There is not sufficient information from participants' response to the survey to determine just how this notion of competence is currently affecting the teaching of educators or how extensive their understandings are of its implications for the teaching of literacy as practice.

'[O]ral then written', exposure to English', 'the opportunity to practise', 'Dictogloss' and 'ASLPR 3'—this is discourse from the Discourse of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). The idea that proficiency in the oral mode should be developed before proficiency in the written mode can occur is a longstanding one in this discipline. There is also the belief that language learners need to be 'exposed' to the new language and given the opportunity to 'practise' new additions to their repertoire. This view comes from studying how children acquire their first language and our own experience that as children we learn to speak before we write. Adult students may be disadvantaged if this this view is rigidly adhered to since it is unlikely that there will be time available to develop individual
oral proficiency before written work is required for assessment purposes. It may not be helpful to separate oral and written modes in this way as there is much overlap; for example, the study of a written text produces an oral text.

The Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating scales (ASLPR) were developed in the early 1980s and designed to provide an instrument for measuring general oral and written language development on a continuum—on a rating scale from no language to native-like proficiency. Their use in an adult Aboriginal education context has been shown to be problematic. In 1993 a team of consultants interviewed students, past and present, staff and community members on behalf of the School of Education Studies at Batchelor College. This revealed a considerable degree of dissatisfaction with the version of the ASLPR which Batchelor College was using as an assessment tool for students. It is now being replaced by procedures which form part of the language and literacy framework Batchelor has since developed for its teacher education students. ASLPR is apparently still being used, at least informally, as a benchmark of literacy for some of the educators in the study.

'Translate' is used by one educator in two contexts; first the student 'translates' and then it is the lecturer who 'translates'. This suggests the rich discursive resources available to both students and educators, particularly those educators who have worked in Aboriginal contexts for extensive periods—a knowledge of cross-cultural linguistics, of Aboriginal languages and Aboriginal Discourses—which permits translation and language comparison to support new language learning. As only one educator apparently draws upon this resource, at least in any formal sense, a powerful discourse is being ignored. One would have to assume that this is to the disadvantage of students.

The idea of 'comprehension' and 'teaching comprehension' is an older one which comes from a Secondary English, literature-focused, orientation. It is interesting to note that both the proponents of PSSDR and DAAR which come from this era have been teaching for 28 years and 32 years respectively! These educators continue to value this activity with students and have presumably found it valuable and generating positive responses from students. The teaching of comprehension has been sadly
neglected in recent years with the focus much more on writing, and the discourse of other educators suggests that it does not feature in their approaches in such a deliberate way. Comprehension teaching methodology did not encourage the critical perspective now expected in an approach to text informed by Critical and Discourse theories, but its emphasis on reading between the lines fits easily into text analysis. This is a potentially useful Discourse upon which educators can build for the benefit of students.

How do educators construct 'literacy'?   
Whether influenced by the survey itself or seduced by the overwhelmingly literate society in which they are embedded, educators appear to construct literacy as an independent variable referring to 'literacy development', 'time for literacy', and 'possessing' literacy—'good literacy levels' etc.

How do educators construct students as learners?  
An interesting construction of students emerges from the discourse of the educators surveyed. Students are positioned as as: clearly stating their needs/wishes for English/literacy teaching over and over again; as pragmatic, their goal being job-related English; as 'frustrated', 'restricted', 'downhearted' with their lack of success (or possibly the failure of their efforts to get more teaching?); as 'knowing where it's at' (in responding with alacrity to learning and using computer technology); as clearly rejecting activities which they perceive as meaningless or 'boring'); as actively resisting being singled out in class as individuals and reluctant to contribute in large groups; as extremely sensitive to being shamed in any way; as having 'huge gaps' in their schooling; and as having limited knowledge of the world outside their community, which forms the context for most English texts.

How do educators construct a good learner? 
Educators allude to good students as having positive attitudes to classwork (handing in assignments), being willing to seek assistance (asking questions) and attending class consistently. This last characteristic is problematic for many mature Aboriginal students given the other demands on their time and attention.
How do educators construct students as learners of English/literacy?
Students are constructed as largely unsuccessful though positively motivated, making very slow progress and plateauing after a certain level of development. At this point 'further specific linguistic development' is needed. Interestingly, educators construct students' lack of success as largely the responsibility of factors outside their (educators') control. Many of these contributory factors were in fact suggested for educators by the framing of the survey question, but respondents were also invited to add any other causes of their own (see table 5). Only one respondent suggests that a contributing factor might be that s/he has no systematic approach for assisting students to make meaning from a piece of text.

How do educators construct students as readers?
Educators construct students as reading a wide variety of texts during their course yet as not reading at all 'outside formal reading sessions'. It is difficult to gauge just how much reading students do as a course requirement, and whether that reading is done jointly or independently. Students are constructed as having particular difficulty with the following: contextual knowledge; the density (embeddedness) of 'professional' texts; the cohesive devices used by writers; unfamiliar concepts (propositions); imagery/metaphor; time orientation; and insufficient knowledge of genre.

How do educators construct students' communities?
Non-urban communities are constructed as socially active places where students must fulfil obligations, but as quite insular, with little knowledge of the world of English texts beyond the community. They are places where very few written materials are to be found and where literacy is largely irrelevant to the way of life. One educator goes so far as to state that community situations are not conducive to students learning English/literacy. There is some tension between this portrayal of communities as managing quite well without literacy and the obvious desire by students for greater knowledge.

How do educators construct themselves in relation to adult education principles and two-way education?
In harmony with the principles of adult education elaborated on in Chapter 1, educators construct good relationships with students as a very high priority, not to be jeopardised by culturally inappropriate teaching
styles. In line with yet another principle they position students as resources for each other and utilise students' own knowledge and experience by fostering peer collaboration through group work. Some educators talk of working with 'real texts' and teaching English/literacy in a 'task-related' way, acknowledging the pragmatism of adult learners. One educator constructs herself as 'experimenting', as a researcher always seeking to respond more appropriately to students' needs. This is reminiscent of gamma philosophy in action. The same educator constructs a multi-media approach to learning as vital for her students. In this way she is valuing the strengths (and the literacies) her adult students bring by seeking to draw upon them in the teaching/learning environment, exemplifying another important tenet of adult education.

A 'both ways' approach is constructed as desirable but some admit that classes are at times too teacher dominated. Scaffolding students' learning is constructed in various ways (see #4.7 (5), however these different ways do not seem to be part of any overall theoretical framework.

How do educators construct themselves as language/literacy teachers?
Professionally, educators construct themselves as pressured, with little time to attend to the literacy needs of individual students. They construct themselves as preparing students to read a wide variety of texts; however, it is unclear how they go about doing this and when this occurs. They construct themselves as intuitive rather than systematic in their approach to the assessment of students' English/literacy development yet, given the opportunity, only one indicates any desire for assistance in this area. Perhaps this reflects the idea that students' English/literacy development is an extremely complex process which is not truly measured by any of the assessment strategies currently available to them. The failure of fifty per cent of respondents to share any effective English/literacy teaching strategies, seems to construct this group of educators as having a limited repertoire of English/literacy teaching strategies to draw upon.

How do educators construct the learning process?
The fact that many educators 'start from the known' when introducing new learning, indicates that they have in fact been influenced by learning theory. There is no evidence from educators' discourse, however, that they are operating from a particular view of the nature of the learning
process in the Vygoskyian sense. There is certainly no reference to challenging students in educators' discourse: perhaps they feel inhibited by cultural factors. Finding ways to scaffold new learning, however, is constructed as a regular part of teaching students and successfully drawing upon educators' teaching skills and their ability to respond creatively. Learning is also constructed as occurring more readily when information is presented in various ways, including non-print media.

In the next chapter this examination of educators' discourse continues, to see how they themselves can be constructed as analysts of texts. Their analysis of the NT News article which was presented to them in the questionnaire forms the basis for this construction. The full version of that text is then deconstructed by this researcher, drawing upon the theories of Systemic Linguistics, Proposition theory, Critical literacy and Discourse theory.
CHAPTER 5

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: THE SAME TEXT, DIFFERENT READINGS

5. 1 Introduction

In this chapter, educators' analyses of the NT News text is presented in some detail. A consideration of these leads to some observations about educators' own knowledge of English written text and their level of skill in discourse analysis.

Aspects of the three different theories discussed in Chapter 2—Systemic Linguistic theory, Propositional Theory and Discourse Theory—are then brought together in an attempt to show the deeper access that is possible by using a more systematic and critical approach to the study of text.

Some considerations to inform the study of discourse with students follow.

5. 2 Educators' analysis of the text from the perspective of student difficulty

Educators' comments on the reading level of the text ranged from 'based on the best student in the Access course, decoding itself is a problem let alone interpretation of meaning' (17:7) to 'I don't think this would be a difficult piece at all for students in Adult Ed to understand' (17:46). Only one respondent considered that the task would present no difficulties at all for her students. The fact that the vast majority of respondents attempted an analysis of the text is taken to indicate that the text was generally accepted as having some relevance and of being of a level of difficulty that is not unreasonable for students to aspire to. One educator, however, felt it had no interest or relevance to his students—'Whole article outside realm of interest/concern of these students' (15:7). Another commented that the text was quite appropriate 'The newspaper article is a form of English students have some familiarity with—mainly through the sports pages—so they would approach it with some confidence' (17:21).
It was made quite clear to participants in the letter which accompanied the questionnaire (Appendix 1) that, even if they felt unable to complete any items, they should still return it. As a result seven educators did not attempt the analysis task at all, giving as reasons their inexperience or pointing to the difficulty or the foreignness of the task. A few others simply indicated one or two possible problem areas, but were unable to offer any explanation for them. Most participants gave time and thought to the analysis. A few of the responses reveal a considerable degree of linguistic awareness.

The difficulties inherent for students in the text, as identified by educators, fall into the following categories:

1. The conceptually dense nature of the passage
2. Insufficient knowledge of the context of the passage
3. Unfamiliar usage of familiar English words
4. The presence of foreign concepts in the text
5. The figurative use of language in the text
6. Difficulties with the time frame of the text
7. Failure to use the cohesive devices supplied by the author
8. Insufficient knowledge of genre
9. Inability to identify how the reader is being positioned by the text

1. The conceptually dense nature of the passage
Several participants allude to the conceptually dense nature of the passage. Although a particular concept might be named by one word or one phrase, each 'contains many subtle meanings and images which would need to be clarified and explained' (13:2). Particular paragraphs are described as 'dense with information' and 'dense lexically' (13:1), 'a cluttered style of writing, brim full with information' (13:25). Because of this density it would be difficult for students 'to locate the focus' (13:28).

2. Insufficient knowledge of the context of the passage
Quite a few respondents emphasise that discussion about the context of the article would need to accompany a study of the text. There would need to be: 'discussion on the tourist trade, company ownership and how they operate (12:32); discussion about 'the tourist trade as against other trades,
for example the rag trade, metal trades or manual trades'; and about 'the 
Jawoyn association as an Aboriginal incorporated body' (12:40). One 
comments that geographical knowledge of the areas being referred to in 
the article might be required (12:1). Others feel that, for students living 
elsewhere in the Territory, it is quite possible that 'the Jawoyn' may be an 
unknown group (12: 7, 9, 17, 32). The notion of a Queensland-based 
company operating in NT would also need some discussion.

'The people of ... have had little experience of this type of arrangement' 
(12:34). What "business" is in this context, and what "a big way" means in 
terms of this, needs discussion' (12:42). The whole concept of 'tourism as 
an industry on the broader scale and business on the smaller scale' also 
needs exploring (12:49). Who or what is Travel North? Mt Todd Zappopan 
mine? Australia Frontier Holidays? (12: 1, 9, 17, 24, 26, 30, 41, 49, 51, 52).

3. Unfamiliar (technical) usage of familiar English words
Some educators consider that English terms which are familiar but which, 
in this context, are used in an unfamiliar way, would present difficulty; for 
example, 50 per cent stake—'normally a pole or stick in the ground, or a 
star picket' (12:16), in a big way—"big way" is normally used to mean the 
same as "long way" (12:16), in the wake of—'could be confused with 
"wake up" (12:41, 48, 30), currently operated by—'the word "operated" is 
normally encountered in the context of hospitals and being very sick' 
(12:16,7), look set—'this would confuse as there was nothing to look at' 
(12:48), going into business—'business' is a word which has particular 
cultural association in Aboriginal communities and does not necessarily 
correlate with the term as it is used in this passage (12:20, 51).

4. The presence of foreign concepts in the text
Many of the concepts necessary to comprehend the article are described as 
foreign to students. These are: 'the NT economy', 'business', 'going into 
business', 'operating a business', 'joint venture', 'joint partnership', 
tourist trade', 'tourism industry', 'association', '50% stake', 'Queensland-
based', 'company', 'car dealership', and 'mine facilities'. Words like 
'announced' and 'announcement' on the other hand, are seen as 
'unfamiliar items of vocabulary'; that is, unknown ways of expressing a 
concept that already exists (12:17, 26, 32, 34, 42, 48, 50). The point is made by 
one educator that, while some words/concepts might be understood
individually, they might not be understood when linked together into another different unit of meaning (12:32). However, another from central Australia considers that the concept of 'tourist trade' could be explained relatively easily because, in the area in which he works, there is familiarity with tourists. Moreover, since concepts such 'joint partnership' and 'joint venture' are not necessarily foreign in themselves, there is some basis on which to begin to understand them in relation to the world of economics (12:17).

Most respondents identify the concept of 'fifty per cent' as foreign or problematic—'for some, percentages are still a mystery' (13:13)—and, in particular, its meaning in relation to a business venture. Other concepts, though cited as problematic, are not always so clearly recognised as mathematical or 'logical' in essence. These include: 'major' which is of course the greater as opposed to the lesser; 'in a big way', implying the concept of amount; 'main' player (in opposition to minor players); 'huge', a measurement which relates to 'big'; 'joint partnership' with its notion of equality or proportion; and 'as a result' introducing relations of cause and effect.

5. The figurative use of language in the text
There are two major metaphors in the passage: firstly, the 'main players' (of the NT economy) and secondly, the image of a ship conjured up by the phrase 'in the wake of a recent announcement'. Many participants did not immediately recognise this as the use of metaphor: 'players in this context is puzzling; is this a game?' (13:7); 'concept of "main players" would have to be explained' (13:9); 'abstract' (13:23), 'jargon, cliche borrowed from another area, that is, sport' (13:25). One respondent, appreciating the 'game' metaphor, comments that students lack this 'knowledge of the economy—that it has players and rules of the game' (13:16). Another sees it as a gambling metaphor, and as referring to the main players in a card game (13:40). In general it is felt that the image would probably serve to confuse students—'The article is about business. Using an apparently opposite term "players" would cause confusion' (13:15). '[S]tudents would regard this as referring to sport, so would infer that the rest of the article somehow related to that' (13:38). Certainly all respondents identify the expression as one that would probably cause difficulties for students. A
Batchelor College lecturer asserts that 'all, bar the "management" students, would have trouble with this idea' (13:22).

The other main metaphor, 'in the wake of', is seen as a probable source of difficulty, but being much easier to explain. Not everyone was able to identify the metaphorical nature of the expression, however, seeing the word 'wake' as the main problem: "'wake'—not a common term' (13:13); "'wake'—a foreign concept' (13:16). Most recognised it as a figurative expression though they did not necessarily identify it as metaphor. 'Is it colloquialism?' one educator asks, and comments rather indignantly 'It is not plain English' (13:14). Another educator, writing from 'desert' country, remarks that, for his students, it is 'a very abstract concept' indeed (13:51).

Some action terms, normally familiar to students, for example, 'going into', 'entering', 'moving' and 'holding', are, in this particular passage, being used in a figurative (or metaphoric) sense, not a literal sense. The following comments are typical. Going into business—the meaning here is not literal—would cause some students trouble' (14:22): 'like 'entry into a building'—difficult to define' (14:16). 'Going' has the connotation of travel' (14:45).

'Enter the tourism industry'—sounds like going through a gate, although the real sense is far from that' (14:25). 'Has entered into a joint venture—abstract' (14:23). 'Move into tourist trade'—abstract rather than literal use of the word. The literal meaning, as in people actually moving, is more likely to be understood' (14:41).

'Will hold a 50 percent stake'—students would have a lot of trouble understanding this idea' (14:22). 'How does one "hold" a 50 per cent stake? (12:1). 'Hold a 50 per cent stake—how does this work?' (14:52).

Educators are aware that these kind of constructions cause difficulty, but find the reasons why less easy to articulate.

6. Difficulties with the time frame of the text
Respondents also anticipate difficulty for students in those items which encode time. 'From May 1993' as a time frame, needs clarification (12:42). 'currently', 'last night' —would students know to refer to the date at the
end of the passage? 'How long ago is a 'recent' announcement?' (12:35). What does 'at any time' mean in relation to the concept of time? (12:32); 'As a result ...'—the notion that 'what has gone before [in time] leads to something further' [later in time] (12:42). Because of their difficulty with time references, one educator considers that many students would miss the future orientation of much that is happening in the passage (12:2).

7. Failure to use the cohesive devices supplied by the author
Six respondents note that students would completely miss the significance of the phrase 'As a result' at the beginning of paragraph three—'[would be] skipped over as meaningless' (15:28). 'As a result'—cause and effect—need to consciously make the connection', comments another respondent (15:12). 'As a result'—this requires students 'to clearly understand and link each paragraph. They must be able to refer back (15:32). 'The relevance of the last two paragraphs may be lost to many readers' [if a connection is not made] (15:25). The positioning of this phrase makes it difficult for my students' (15:45). '[There would be difficulty for students in] going back and identifying the cause' (15:16).
Only three respondents note that 'This news' also requires readers to make links with previous information in the text.

8. Insufficient knowledge of genre
A small minority of respondents (5) comment on the need to work with students on the genre of the newspaper article—'the genre of the article, the way in which the language is used, how to identify how recent the article is, who wrote it etc. would require work (15:32). They described some of the features of the genre—the use of abbreviated language for the headline (15:21), the use of the headline 'as a topic sentence' (15:3), 'structure is typical pyramid shape of news report—it introduces topic and gives three examples of Aboriginals going into industry' (15:24). It is recognised that for some students this is unfamiliar territory—'genre difficult, [students are] unfamiliar with style and purpose' (15:16).

9. Inability to identify how the reader is being positioned by the text
There is criticism of the writing—'poorly paragraphed, lexically dense with each sentence being its own paragraph (15:1), '[the] whole article is a confusing mixture of tenses and predictions' (15:19), 'joint partnership—I always understood partnership was joint!' (15:12).
A few educators detect the assumptions being made by the writer of this article, about the nature of his audience: 'Geographical knowledge and [a knowledge of] commercial names is assumed' (16:1); 'the writer assumes the reader understands economic terms as well as mathematical concepts' (16:2); 'a knowledge of business terms is assumed' (16:20); 'only insiders and interested readers (those who follow these deals) would know of [the different companies] (16:52); and [this is] written for first language users' (16:44).

Only four educators indicate by their comments (albeit obliquely) that a deeper and more critical reading of the text is possible. The notion of cross-cultural sharing is hinted at in the article. ... show[s] a deal being made with the broader community, to the benefit of all' (16:34). The implications of main players include power, equality, etc (16:48). 'Huge joint partnership—first time joint partnership has been modified. Could it be that the writer is questioning Aboriginal moves into the business world?' (16:52). One respondent refers indirectly to some of the Discourses present in the text, but without using the term. 'Adult ed students ... are familiar with most of the concepts: tourism, business, making deals, moving towards independence' (16:46).

5.3 How do educators construct themselves as textual analysts?

A majority of educators have a good 'sense' of what their students find difficult in an English text but because they do not yet have the linguistic framework within to clearly describe these difficulties, this 'sensing' does not equip them to effectively address students' problems. There is an absence in their discourse of the metalanguage necessary to talk about textual matters.

The following deconstruction of these educators' analysis of the NT News text is linked as far as possible to the different approaches to text described.

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1 These different approaches are closely connected and constantly overlap, for example, socio-cultural notions are encoded in many different aspects of discourse: in propositions, in logical connectives (the way propositions have been related), in imagery (faded metaphor) and metaphor and in the text's various temporal and spatial orientations. A particular metaphor may identify the Discourse being drawn upon. Meaning can be made from all aspects of the text.
earlier in this study: the text-as-texture approach of Systemic grammarians (especially cohesion); the text-as-propositions approach of exponents of Proposition theory (the ideology); the text-as-constructing-reality approach of critical theorists (the constructions in the text); and the text-as-discourse approach of Discourse theory (the Conversations).

Text-as-texture
Many educators recognise that the cohesive features of written English will present difficulties: its embedded nature—'dense with information'; its logic—'[connecting language] would be skipped over as meaningless'; its time orientation; its use of grammatical metaphor or 'thingification'—'the meaning here is not literal', '[this is] abstract rather than literal use'. One educator, commenting that students would find it 'difficult to locate the focus' in a particular sentence, alludes to the informational structure of the text (or the apparent lack of it). This person's discourse indicates, however, that his or her textual knowledge is largely confined to the level of genre, the whole-text structure.

Text-as-ideology
All of the educators who responded to this section of the survey identified as problematic a large number of textual items which refer readers to the socio-cultural context of the text. These idea units or propositions are usually constructed in educators' discourse as 'vocabulary': the deeper socio-cultural notion of nomenclature is apparently unappreciated.

Text-as-Discourse
Educators largely fail to appreciate the extensiveness of the context which must be available to a reader of English text and which a focus on text-as-discourse reveals. One or two educators come close with the comment '[there would need to be] discussion on the tourist trade, company ownership and how they operate' and 'what businesses in this context ... needs discussion'. A few educators hint at the presence of Discourses in the text however the discursive resources available to describe these are limited to 'jargon', 'cliche', 'abstract'. The pervasive presence of metaphor and the association of these with different Discourses are overlooked. One educator refers to the presence of 'subtle meanings and images' but in general metaphors are 'puzzling', 'a colloquialism?'. However the imagery suggested by the metaphorical fragments was undoubtedly used
by a few educators themselves when reading to intuit the presence of some Discourses. Metaphor and the particular idiomatic language characteristic of these Discourses, for example, 'going into business' 'a fifty per cent stake' etc are confused. Still in relation to socio-culturalpects of the text some respondents refer to the 'genre' of the text and describe some of its characteristics; however, there does not appear to be the idea of a wider framework into which genres 'fit' (for example, as one of the text types generated by a particular Discourse).

Test-as-construction-of-reality

Educators construct themselves as largely uncritical readers. It is interesting to speculate whether their reading would have been more critical if the article's authorship had been acknowledged. (The journalist in question is a local identity who provokes controversy.) A few are able to speculate on the kind of audience for whom this is written, but none are able to clearly articulate the writer's construction of himself, his audience and the participants in the text.

The above analysis constructs educators as intuitive rather than linguistically or critically informed in their assessment of textual difficulties for students in English written text. Few discursive resources for discussing textual matters seem to be available to these educators. Many had considerable difficulties with this task.

5.4 What does this tell us about the current literacy teaching situation?

Thirty-one of the fifty-two educators in the survey indicate that they currently use text analysis as a strategy with students; however the construction of educators' text analysis skills in the previous section suggests that, at the moment, they have insufficient linguistic knowledge and insufficient discursive resources to implement effective text/discourse analysis with students. An opportunity to assist students with their English/literacy learning is being lost.

5. 5 An analysis of the text using aspects from Systemic Linguistic, Proposition and Discourse Theories
In the following sections, the same (edited) text which was analysed by respondents is deconstructed by this researcher. See Table 6 for an
overview of the particular features selected for the initial 'grammatical' analysis. (Each is dealt with more fully in the Appendix whose number appears in the final column.) Following this the complete and unedited version is critically examined as discourse (see Appendix 21).

5.6 An analysis of the grammatical and semantic (ideational) features of the text

1. Propositional organisation
In Appendix 9 the collocational chains in the text (that is, continual reference to the same participant, who may be sometimes described using alternative or associated terms) have been identified—an activity which provides a quick overview of the major themes of the text.

In Appendix 10, the text has been sectioned off quite simply into who, what, where, how, why and when, to show how the propositions are organised. This is one way for educators themselves to get an overview of what is happening in the text, and a way in which they can demonstrate to students how the propositions in the text are organised. It reveals, in a simple yet graphic way, just what is going on in this text, in fact what goes on in all texts. On a grander scale texts can be understood as a commentary on the affairs of the world—what ideas or institutions are doing/influencing who or what, where!

2. The hierarchy of the propositions encoded in the text
Propositions (idea units) occur at both the macro-level—the entire text as encapsulated by the title, whole paragraphs, complexes of clauses (whole sentences) and—at the micro-level—as clauses, phrases, single words or combinations of words. Appendix 11 identifies the propositions in the text firstly at the macro-level, and then, by illustrating (some of) the constituent concepts within one of the larger propositions, at a micro-level. This exercise can highlight for educators the different levels of concepts which need to be confirmed or explored with students on subsequent readings of the text.

3. The relationships between propositions
In Appendix 12 the nature of the relationships between propositions (the logic of the text) is examined. In this text they are either additive, or
elaborating or causal. Additive relationships are signalled in this text by the use of 'and'. Two of the propositions which elaborate or expand on previous propositions are introduced by 'that'; for example, 'an announcement that .....'. In other words what follows is to be taken as an elaboration of, or further information about, the 'announcement'. Propositions which elaborate or expand on previous information are often more difficult to detect as they are not so clearly signalled. The relationship must be deduced.

Establishing the relationship between propositions in this way is another activity which educators can use to ensure that students are clear about the ways in which the ideas in a text relate to each other.

Rhetorical structures signal the logical relationship between propositions and should alert the reader to the fact that the writer is about to construct events in a particular way. 'As a result' indicates to the reader that the writer is positioning the proposition which follows in a consequential relationship to a proposition which has been referred to earlier in the text. Readers must be alerted to the fact that when such a structure is encountered they should immediately retrace their steps to find the 'cause'.

4 Ellipsis
The omission of items which are to be 'understood' or 'read' is extremely common in English and can cause considerable difficulty for readers to whom English is not a first language. There are two examples of ellipsis in this passage (Appendix 13): 'and [they] look set' (Line 2) and 'the boat tours [which are] currently operated by ...' (Line 10). Characteristically for a newspaper article, the headline also features ellipsis, having been reduced to key words only. Educators will need to alert students to the need to retrieve missing items in text in this way.

5 Deixis
Different types of deictic references are highlighted in Appendix 14 (time) and 15 (space). These show how the 'scene' of the article has been set by the writer: particular actors, locations and times are identified. Those of time are realised in the text by verb tenses—('are going', 'announced'), and those of location in prepositional phrases ('at Katherine'). Readers
must be able to use these 'pointers' to help them situate the action of the
text and assist the comprehension process.

6 Reference
Writers may refer to a participant already introduced in the text by name.
In subsequent references the pronouns 'he', 'she', 'it', 'they', 'them', 'this'
etc may be substituted. This kind of substitution is extremely common in
English texts. Educators may need to help students to trace these references
back to their source in order to maintain comprehension. In the text under
analysis, however, there are only two such 'within text' references
(Appendix 16). This news' (Line 12) is slightly unusual in that it refers
back to the whole of the first part of the text, not simply one item. 'The
boat tours links back to a previous occurrence.

Writers must assume some prior knowledge in a reader. Since they cannot
inscribe all the necessary information without 'blowing out' the text to
ridiculous proportions they must make decisions about what information
to provide the reader and what knowledge to assume the reader already
possesses. References in the Jawoyn text to assumed prior knowledge of
the context—the world outside the text—are listed in Appendix 17.

When studying a text educators must take care to identify these
assumptions and to confirm with students that these assumptions are in
fact justifiable. If not, ways need to be found to provide the background
information necessary for a successful reading of the text.

7 The use of nominalisation or grammatical metaphor
Appendix 18 reveals a most interesting feature of English, most often
written English—the tendency to 'thingify' or nominalise a concept (or
cluster of concepts) and then to treat it as if it were an object which exists
in space and time, able to act on the world, or to possess things or qualities.
Halliday employs the term 'grammatical metaphor' for this phenomenon.
In this study it is referred to as 'thingification', 'spatialisation' and
'anthropomorphism' to show that there are separate processes at work.

Summary
The preceding analysis draws upon two of the ways of regarding text
described in previous chapters: text-as-texture (cohesion); and text-as-ideas
(propositions). From this it can be seen that important meanings are encoded in the grammar of a text—in its thematic organisation, its deictic references, its rhetorical structures—and in its propositions.

The text has been analysed in this way to show the potential information about English and about the practice of literacy which could be shared with students by 'reading' the text together at different times, in different ways, and at different levels. The analysis itself is neither exhaustive, nor even highly systematic. The textual features highlighted are dictated (and restricted) by the particular text being studied. However an unrealistically time-consuming model of analysis is likely to alienate busy people. This approach seeks to provide educators with a relatively quick method of scanning a text which will give them a starting point for examining it in more detail with their students.

5.7 An analysis of the text as discourse

Appendices 19 and 20 indicate the Discourses which feature in the complete, unedited text, both major and minor. Detecting the presence of a Discourse can sometimes be compared to searching for a tiny precious object that is 'lost' on a richly patterned carpet. At first it seems to be well hidden against its complex background. The task of the searcher is made easier if she or he can develop an image of the lost object in his/her head so that even if only a part of it is glimpsed, this will bring the remainder into view. The elusive treasure will eventually emerge from its background and be 'found'. When searching for the presence of Discourses in a text it is often the author's choice of a particular word or words which provide a glimpse of the whole image. For example the phrase 'break away' suggests an image of straining to be free of captivity.

Another analogy to describe the method of detecting the presence of a Discourse might be to compare the activity with that of a listener who is straining intently to hear scraps of an important conversation. These scraps can then be used as the basis for reconstructing the whole message. Applied to a text, this means that the writer's choice of a particular word or phrase might suggest to the reader or 'listener' the echo of a

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I am indebted to Sue Reabum for her help in the formulation of this metaphor.
conversation or discourse. Embedded in the fragment of 'dialogue' will be clues pointing to a particular context, a particular time and place. Some words will suggest several possible 'conversations' so reference must be made to the Discourses around to finally select the particular conversation or Discourse most likely to have been intended by the writer (whether conciously or unconsciously)\(^3\).

The ability to identify a Discourse by conjuring up an image or making associations from scraps of 'conversation' is clearly dependent upon detailed cultural knowledge.

As we have seen, Kress (1985) posits that all Discourses are in contention with each other, that, in fact they owe their very existence to that state of contention for, without it, there would be no need for conversation or dialogue. Once the different Discourses in a text have been identified the relationships or tensions between them can be examined, giving greater depth still to the reading. In some texts a writer's purpose may be to exaggerate or to celebrate or to poke fun at the differences between Discourses. In others it may be to ignore difference, to suppress it or even to eliminate it by allowing one Discourse to dominate all the others. The eventual outcome is realised in the roles and positions of the different Discourses in the text. According to Kress, a successful text is one in which difference or conflict is not ignored or suppressed but is satisfactorily resolved (Ibid, pp. 12-18). An analysis of the unedited text according to its Discourses appears in Appendix 21.

5.8 Text-as-discourse: a way of understanding text

It surprised this researcher just how powerful the construct of 'Discourses' proved in opening up doors in the mind as it enabled quite a different reading of the passage from that gained initially. The reading of this particular text relies heavily on the reader's ability to bring to awareness a usually tacit, yet acculturated, knowledge of the Discourses of English-speaking people in the Northern Territory of Australia. The particular

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3Some of these Discourses were identified by this researcher only after many readings of the text. Perhaps this is because they are now more elusive and difficult to 'see' having almost 'faded' into the background (the English language) or perhaps because only a tiny fragment of the conversation now survives (a single word is all the reader has upon which to build the remainder of the dialogue).
reading offered is of course influenced by the researcher's own Discourse history—her current position at the intersection of particular Discourses. Another member of the culture, differently situated, having a different Discourse history, might provide quite a different reading. However—and this is most important—it seems to this researcher that for a reading to be accepted as valid, each reader must substantiate his/her reading by reference to within-text relationships and/or by appeal to other members of the culture. If there is sufficient support for a 'reading' in either or both of these ways it can be considered a 'true' reading.

5. 9 Discourse analysis: some considerations for educators

In this chapter an article from a local newspaper has been analysed by drawing together theories about cohesion and information structure in text (Systemic Linguistics Theory), socio-cultural idea units in text (Proposition Theory), Discourses in text (Discourse Theory) and the construction of reality in and by text (Critical Literacy Theory).

By approaching the text in these different but complementary ways: text-as-texture, text-as-ideology, text-as-discourse and text-as-construction of reality, a much fuller and more critical reading has been possible. It is therefore suggested that shared text deconstruction is a strategy which educators could use to effectively teach English and demonstrate the practice of literacy in action. The following are some suggestions as to how this strategy might be developed.

Text deconstruction, like text construction, is not a natural process. It is a specific technique which would have to be developed over time. At first the process would have to be modelled several times—either in the form of a monologue (talking aloud to oneself) or as dialogue between two or more 'readers' (a colleague). The modelling process could reveal the ways in which a reader can use the cohesive devices in the text provided by the writer. It could also reveal the different levels of propositions embedded in the text and the logic by which they are connected. It could reveal the imagery in the language choice of the writer and the presence of

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4This is the benchmark used by Halliday & Hasan (1976) (and Hasan (1968) to assess what is an acceptable utterance in English.
Discourses. Students can gradually be encouraged to take a greater and greater part in the process.

It could be expected that the deconstruction of an English text would be a more difficult exercise for readers whose 'ear' is largely tuned to different Discourses, in different languages and whose socio-historical background does not resonate with the allusions in the text. It seems reasonable to ask if it is, in fact, possible for many Aboriginal adult students to access English texts at this level. In a partial answer to that question, Aboriginal readers already adopt a critical stance by virtue of their marginalisation by the English-speaking majority in Australian society. They should also have little difficulty accepting the fact that texts have different levels of meaning, as most 'stories' that they are familiar with in their own languages already do.

However, although critical, few are sufficiently informed to discuss the ways in which many English texts disempower them as individuals, or as members of a group, or both. Students may be strongly motivated therefore to prove what they already suspect. Whether it is possible for students to learn to deconstruct English texts in ways that are ultimately transformative will depend, in part, upon the skill of educators—their willingness to dialogue with each other and with students, and their willingness to place themselves in the role of learner.

Another question we might ask is whether it is, in fact, possible for a non-Aboriginal educator who is, after all, enculturated and embedded in the Discourses of English-speaking society, to deconstruct these texts. Being an 'insider' means that, in some ways, this is not an easy task. The non-Aboriginal educator is being asked to make the 'invisible' visible, the unproblematic, problematic. A considerable degree of self-knowledge is required. One must be highly motivated to make such a deliberate effort to critique one's own ideas and ways of operating. And just how motivated can we expect educators to be in their task of assisting students to examine these texts critically? It is scarcely comfortable to have one's prejudices laid bare, whether personal or societal. To have one's perceptions of who one is challenged, and to have the ground shift under one's feet, can be immensely threatening.
Furthermore is it desirable for educators and students to access texts at this level? Surely students themselves must be the judge of this. Discourse analysis will probably not be a panacea for the many difficulties students and educators face with English literacy. It is only one strategy: one which could complement the practice of writing from a personal perspective, not supplant it. Students' interest may be demonstrated in different ways: increased alertness in class, longer periods of attentiveness, greater participation etc.

However, deconstructing texts is not likely to be a completely comfortable experience for the people involved. The process may reveal the highly ethnocentric (and possibly assimilationist) sub-text of many of the texts presented to students. The notion that there are different perspectives and therefore different readings may be difficult for some educators and students to accept. There may be anger expressed as a writer's position becomes clear or disagreement expressed over interpretation. Educators will be challenged to deal sensitively with these issues. However, if reading is to have a transformative potential, not merely an interpretive one, educators and students may need to be prepared to cross boundaries they normally regard as sacrosanct.

As they become more confident in English, students will hopefully develop an 'inner ear' which will enable them to tune into Discourses more easily. In due course students may construct their own readings. It is possible that there will be varied and even conflicting readings of some texts. Educators must be prepared to be disempowered as, in the process, students become empowered.

In the final chapter some conclusions are drawn about the findings of this study. Recommendations are made for the inclusion of discourse analysis in students' courses and for the professional development of educators in the areas of English and literacy teaching.

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5A more systematic approach which might be helpful to educators to get them started is described in Appendix 22.
CHAPTER 6:

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 What the data reveals about the current situation

The data collected as part of this research project would suggest that the vast majority of adult Aboriginal students in this study badly want to improve their practice of English/literacy. They continually express a desire for more opportunities to develop their skills and it seems to this researcher that the frustration they appear to experience may be associated not only with their own difficulties, but with a lack of access to the kind of English/literacy teaching they are seeking.

The reasons for students' difficulties with written text are many and complex and have been explored earlier in the study. Literacy practices are not integral to students' way of life; written text is very different from oral text; English written text has its own peculiar characteristics; and English/literacy teaching methodologies which are used elsewhere are not necessarily appropriate in these contexts. It has also been suggested that to support the self-determining aspirations of communities the development of a particular kind of literacy practice is essential for these students, one which will not only enable them to read, but to evaluate text critically.

In their own discourse the educators in the study construct themselves as sensitive to the cultural factors which impact on their work. Their methodologies display good understandings of principles of adult education and they strive to incorporate two-way learning into their teaching. The discursive resources they display indicate access to a range of language and literacy teaching approaches and orientations, some current, some now out of favour, some inappropriate, some inadequately understood. A minority of educators have access to students' own languages and Discourses, bringing a two-way dimension to their teaching. There seems to be little consistency, however, across or within institutions; each educator works with his/her own individual approach. While they are concerned with students' apparent lack of success, they see the problem as due to a range of factors largely outside their control.
The failure of fifty per cent of participants to respond to the invitation to share at least one successful language/literacy teaching strategy constructs this group of educators as having a very limited repertoire upon which to draw. This apparent lack of confidence is reinforced by the wide range of language and literacy-related professional assistance requested later on in the survey. They have no consistent or formal ways of assessing students' language and literacy competencies and rely on their own intuition and teaching experience. This may reflect both a lack of available and appropriate assessment programs and the realisation that language and literacy development is an extremely complex process which is not easily measured.

There was no question in the survey instrument which specifically sought to ascertain educators' own theories of learning, however many educators provide scaffolding of some kind for students when new learning is presented or when students are put into situations where there is greater risk of failure. Perhaps because they are reluctant to jeopardise their relationships with students in any way, the Vygotskyan notion of pushing students beyond their level of comfort as a way to facilitate learning is not present in their discourse.

The educators in this study construct themselves as relatively uncritical readers of an English text. Moreover there is an absence in their discourse of the metalanguage necessary to talk about textual matters. A majority has a good 'sense' of what their students might find difficult but because they do not appear to have a framework within which to describe these difficulties, this 'sensing' does not equip them to effectively address students' problems.

All of this suggests the conclusion that, in the Northern Territory at least, educators need help with ideas which can situate the understandings they already have about language/literacy into a more cohesive framework.
6.2 The benefits of a systematic approach to discourse analysis

A more systematic approach to the teaching of literacy through the study of a written English text, such as that suggested in Appendix 22, has potential benefits. Discourse analysis can be practised within existing courses, using the recommended texts. As an adult education strategy it positions teacher and students as co-participants in a task. It fosters collaborative, not independent effort. It allows the possibility that students and teacher will exchange viewpoints, bring real-life experience to their learning and reveal other Discourses they each have access to. Discussions will inevitably arise about how different languages have different ways of expressing ideas, how different cultures interpret experience.

As a language strategy this approach to shared text analysis is spiral in development. Readers visit and revisit the same text but develop increasing levels of understanding and practise the metalanguage which accompanies the process. The activity becomes a concentrated language encounter or CLE (Gray, 1990). The ability to discuss the language of the text will increase students' ability to ask for assistance. Developing and using metalanguage will involve students in a level of abstraction important for academic study and therefore for their continued professional development.

The particular linguistic approaches in this study—Systemic Linguistics, Proposition Theory, Discourse Theory and Critical Literacy Theory—have been drawn together because of the possibility they offer to examining a text at deeper, more culturally or ideologically oriented levels. Readers are asked to consider the text: as texture, as ideology, as discourse and as construction of reality. Whether this is done simultaneously or in a particular sequence will be up to educators and students to determine, as they develop this strategy together for themselves.

Another benefit of text/discourse analysis of this kind is that it can be done intensively over a relatively short period of time—a day or so—thus capitalising on students' attendance at workshops since, as we have already seen, it is unrealistic to expect that students will have the opportunity for regular practice in reading outside class. It provides educators with an opportunity for teaching about specific features of
English and how the language works, especially in written text. Over several texts many common structures will be reinforced. It may also give students an insight into how languages change over time.

For adult students who are unlikely to have the opportunity for the continuous reading practice necessary to become competent across a range of text types, this strategy deals with many language, literacy and textual considerations and makes links between them. Once the process becomes familiar it should provide students with a strategy they can use independently.

6.3 Unresolved tensions in this study

How one defines literacy has serious implications for practice and there is a tension in this study between the construction of literacy as an 'independent variable' (this view is inherent in the questionnaire which went out to respondents early in the life of the project), and the reference to literacy as (a specific cultural) 'practice' which develops later on in the study. This tension reflects both the timing of the survey and this researcher's developing understanding. The implications for the adult non-urban context of constructing literacy as practice have yet to be explored.

The development of the questionnaire at an early stage in the project resulted in a further tension—questions in the survey focus on educators' assessments, perceptions and opinions (a psychological orientation), while the data is eventually treated as discourse (a critical orientation). This tension is not resolved in the study but hopefully it has at least contributed to the development of a richer, more complex picture of educators than would have otherwise been possible.

There is a further tension arising from this study. It seems that educators are ambivalent about their role vis-a-vis their students' language and literacy difficulties. On the one hand they acknowledge these difficulties and are concerned about them, on the other hand they make no connection between their own teaching practice and those difficulties. Only in one instance was difficulty with teaching cited as a factor in
students' lack of progress. There could be different reasons for this omission. Perhaps acknowledgement of the teaching/learning connection is implicit rather than expressed. Perhaps it is acknowledged in their request for professional development. Perhaps educators see themselves as responsible for teaching 'content' not responsible for teaching language and literacy. Educators already work in contexts which situate them at the edge of their knowledge and previous experience: they already feel inadequate in many ways. Perhaps they do not wish to remind themselves of yet another cause for concern.

6.4 Recommendations of this study

On the basis of the findings of this study it is recommended that educators are given the opportunity for greater professional assistance in the teaching of English literacy. As part of any program of professional development they should be encouraged to accept that the quality of the literacy students develop is important and that even beginning adult readers can be taught to look and listen for Discourses in a text. Discourse analysis is one strategy which could assist educators to bring many aspects of the teaching of English and literacy together and a particular approach is suggested by this study; however, providers and course writers may have to choose between the indepth study of a limited number of texts and the more cursory treatment of many.

Students may need to undergo greater preparation for courses. A preliminary term or semester may need to be set aside for intensive work on students' literacy needs. Text/discourse analysis (and related activities) could form a central part of that preparation.

6.5 Recommendations for further study

The present study has been a largely exploratory one in a field neglected until very recently. A potentially powerful teaching strategy, developed by combining aspects of three different approaches to text has been hypothesised, but not yet put into practice. Others must prove the efficacy or otherwise of this strategy.
A future study might pilot discourse analysis with students and record their responses and the results achieved. Case studies of educators and students engaged in discourse analysis could be developed. A variation on this might include researching different approaches to teaching English literacy in particular contexts and including the use of discourse analysis as one of these. This study might also involve documenting the different types of interpersonal relationships fostered between educators and students as a result of these different approaches and the degree to which each approach allows for the recognition and use of cultural knowledge. A future study might involve Aboriginal educators exclusively and ascertain their thoughts about the development of English literacy and how best this might be done.

6.6 Conclusion

In this study, this researcher has sought to provide educators working with adult Aboriginal students from non-urban communities with immediate practical support in their task of helping students meet the requirements of courses which prepare them for that very specific context. There are a number of other studies currently being undertaken which have already been referred to, and which will also provide pertinent information for those working in the field. It is hoped that the recommendations of this and these other studies will increase the opportunities for Aboriginal community members to develop the kinds of literacy which will enable them to effectively support the aspirations of their communities.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1: Questionnaire

A SAMPLING OF ADULT LITERACY PRACTICE IN NON-URBAN SETTINGS IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey on the teaching of literacy to Aboriginal adult students who come from non-urban centres.

There are 26 questions in this questionnaire. Don't be daunted, many will be quickly answered. Some are intended to build up a profile of teachers and students, others are to gain an insight into strategies which teachers have found successful (or unsuccessful). These will require you to reflect on your practice. Also included is a text which you are asked to analyse from the point of view of potential difficulty for your students.

It is my intention through this study to contribute information and ideas which will ultimately support you and the people who come after you and ultimately of course the Aboriginal people with whom you work. I would ask you therefore to respond to the questions honestly and confidently.

This survey is an attempt to get a better picture of what is happening in adult literacy programs and highlight some strategies which might be helpful to practitioners. If you would like to know more about any of the strategies referred to in the questionnaire that are unfamiliar, please let me know. If on the other hand you are experiencing success with a particular strategy I would be very happy to learn more about it from you.

If you find you are unable to answer all of the questions in the questionnaire, please return it nevertheless.

In appreciation of your co-operation a copy of The Black Perspective, an annotated bibliography of commercially available reading materials by about and for Aboriginal people, will be available if you so wish.

I would very much appreciate a prompt reply, and certainly no later than 16th August 1993. Thank you once again for your co-operation.

Yours Sincerely

PAT BEATTIE
ADULT LITERACY SURVEY

Please answer the following questions. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Student Details
1. Which course(s) involve you in the teaching of English literacy?
   Name
   a) .............................................................. ..............................................................
   b) .............................................................. ..............................................................
   c) .............................................................. ..............................................................

2. Which communities do students come from?
   a. .............................................................. b. .............................................................. c. ..............................................................

3. What is the major focus of the course(s)?
   a) ........................................................................................................................................
   b) ........................................................................................................................................
   c) ........................................................................................................................................

4. How would you describe your students' motivation to learn English? Please tick the nearest correct answer.
   very high □    high □    low □    very low □

On what do you base this assessment?
........................................................................................................................................

5. How would you describe your students' motivation to become literate in English?
   very high □    high □    low □    very low □

On what do you base this assessment?
........................................................................................................................................

6. How would you assess your students' current level of English literacy proficiency?
   very high □    high □    low □    very low □

If there is a range of levels in the group please specify below.
........................................................................................................................................

7. Is this assessment
   intuitive?
   based on teaching experience?
   based on a more formal test? (Please give details below)
........................................................................................................................................
Course details
8. What type of English texts are you preparing your students to read? Please tick.

Minutes of meetings  □ Letters  □ Magazines  □ Comics  □
Public notices  □ Newspapers  □ Novels  □ Magazines  □
Instructions or Manuals  □ Library books  □ Reference books  □ Lists  □
Forms  □ Reports  □ Articles  □ Curriculum documents  □
Other  □ Please specify ..............................................

9. What type of English texts do students engage with over the period of the course?

Minutes of meetings  □ Letters  □ Magazines  □ Comics  □
Public notices  □ Newspapers  □ Novels  □ Magazines  □
Instructions or Manuals  □ Library books  □ Reference books  □ Lists  □
Forms  □ Reports  □ Articles  □ Curriculum documents  □
Other  □ Please specify ..............................................

Comment
..................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................

10. In the process of teaching English literacy do you allow students any opportunity to use their own language? Please tick.

no  □  yes  □  If yes, how do you do this?
English literacy

11. Please imagine that students are required to read the text on the next page as part of a course or topic they are studying.

If you were to work with your students, for however long it would take, to enable them to fully understand this passage, what are all the difficulties, in your view, that might impede their understanding of it?

Include:
• concepts within the text that might be difficult to understand and (if possible) say why
• grammatical items in the text that might cause difficulty and (if possible) say why
• ideas about the purpose, the audience and the wider context of the text that might be problematic for the reader and (if possible) say why

Circle the word/phrase etc., draw a line from it and number it. Comment briefly on the nature of each difficulty in the space provided. e.g.

The 63-year-old central Australian whose major works can fetch more than $30 000 a piece has been struggling to produce good canvasses this year.

1. difficult because it refers back to main character and forward to 'major works'
2. involves the notion of 'selling to the highest bidder' - may need explanation and discussion
3. students may have difficulty with the timeframe
4. involves the notion of the art industry; the place of art in Western society - this may be a foreign concept
5. the role of the media; the genre of newspaper articles; the assumptions made about audience - all would need discussion

NB If you feel a particular item would cause difficulty but you are not sure exactly why this might be, put a circle around it and number it anyway.
JAWOYN PLAN MOVE INTO TOURIST TRADE

 Territory Aborigines are going into business in a big way and look set to become some of the NT economy's main players.

 The Jawoyn Association last night announced plans to enter the tourism industry at Katherine in a joint venture with Travel North.

 From May 1993 the Jawoyn will hold a 50 per cent stake with Travel North in the camping ground and boat tours in Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park.

 As a result the association will buy out the boat tours currently operated by the Queensland-based Australia Frontier Holidays.

 This news comes in the wake of a recent announcement that a central Australian Aboriginal group has entered into a joint venture with Toyota car dealership at Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Mitsubishi.

 An announcement is also expected at any time that the Jawoyn have entered into a huge joint partnership with a major Territory company to build the Mt Todd Zappopan mine facilities.

 NT News P2 (slightly adapted)
 Wednesday 29th April 1993
If necessary please continue on an additional sheet of paper and attach.
12. Which of the kind of difficulties you have identified in the text on the previous page do you specifically teach to in your course? How?

No. | Strategy
---|---

13. What do you perceive as your students' greatest problem in comprehending the English texts with which you work? (Please rank the following in order of magnitude from the most serious to the least serious problem, starting from 1).

a. insufficient understanding of the task of the reader
b. insufficient background knowledge of the content
c. insufficient background knowledge of the socio-cultural context of English
d. inability to decode print
e. insufficient knowledge of the structure of English texts
f. insufficient knowledge of the structure of English
g. previous negative experience in learning English/literacy
h. reading the words but not understanding
i. insufficient knowledge of the purpose of the writer
j. other?

Comments on the above
14. Which of the following strategies (if any) do you use regularly with students? Please tick.
   a) text analysis (similar to what you have done overleaf)
   b) drawing diagrams or 'mind maps' to clarify ideas with each other
   c) sequencing (cutting up and re-arranging the whole text, or parts of the text)
   d) retelling/rewriting the text
   e) cloze (filling in blanks)
   f) cutting up and re-assembling parts of the text
   g) read-a-long (reading along with you, or a cassette recording of the text)
   h) teaching word attack skills based on the text (phonics, word building etc)
   i) acting out (meanings, the story)
   j) manipulating objects to demonstrate relationships/events
   k) critiquing the message of a text with students

15. Describe other strategies for teaching English literacy that you find work well with your students?
   1. .................................................................................................................................
   2. .................................................................................................................................

16. Describe any strategies for teaching English literacy that you have found do not work well with your students?
   1. .................................................................................................................................
   2. .................................................................................................................................

17. Do you consider that your students are making good progress in learning English literacy?
   Yes ☐  No ☐  (Please give reasons for your answer below)
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................

18. Is this assessment intuitive?
   based on teaching experience? ☐
   based on a more formal assessment procedures? (Please specify below) ☐
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................
   x
Personal details

19. Gender Name (optional) ................................ ...........................................................

20. Where did you come from? (last teaching location) ..........................................................

21. How long have you been teaching Aboriginal students? .................................................

22. Are you
   a tutor? ☐
   an adult educator? ☐
   a college lecturer? ☐
   other? (please specify below) ☐

23. What is your teaching background? Tick the one which applies.
   Primary ☐ Secondary ☐ TAFE ☐ Tertiary ☐ untrained ☐

24. Do you have a qualification in teaching:
   English as a Second Language (ESL)? Please tick. yes ☐ no ☐
   adult literacy? yes ☐ no ☐

25. When you need ideas or support in teaching English/literacy, to whom do you turn? ..........

26. What is the area in which you would like to learn more about the teaching of English/ 
   literacy to Aboriginal adult students from non-urban contexts . ......................................

THAT IS THE END OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE. THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO MAKE ADDITIONAL COMMENTS OF ANY KIND. YOUR RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE WILL OF COURSE REMAIN STRICTLY ANONYMOUS. THE RESULTS OF THIS SURVEY WILL EVENTUALLY BE AVAILABLE THROUGH NTU AND THE NORTHERN TERRITORY COUNCIL FOR ADULT LITERACY (NTCAL).

If you would be interested in receiving a personal copy of *The Black Perspective*, (an annotated bibliography of commercially available publications by, about and for Aboriginal people) please tick
   yes ☐ no ☐

Please return this survey form, in the stamped addressed envelope provided, to:
Pat Beattie, 6 Lovegrove Street, Ludmilla, Darwin, 0820. Ph 089 412406
APPENDIX 2: Letter to NTOC

6 Lovegrove Street
Ludmilla
Darwin 0820
8th July 1993

Rick Ralph
Assistant Director
NTOC

Dear Rick,

I am writing to request your permission to approach some members of your staff, in particular, those currently teaching the Certificate in Access to Employment and Further Study courses to adult Aboriginal students from non-urban centres, and ask them if they would be willing to take part in a survey. Attached is a copy of the questionnaire.

As you will see, the questionnaire seeks to ascertain details of current classroom practice, particularly the treatment of reading (or discourse) comprehension. Responses from the questionnaire will be analysed to build up a profile of the current practice of the teachers in the sample in order that a) successful (and unsuccessful) strategies can be shared and b) other strategies recommended as a result of the latest theories of discourse comprehension.

It is my intention eventually to make the results of this study widely available so that it can inform adult literacy programs and support adult educators. The study will eventually be available through the Northern Territory University, or the NT Council for Adult Literacy, or from myself.

It is my hope that the findings of the study will have considerable interest and practical application for adult educators, and that this will, of course, ultimately benefit students. I am currently on full-time study leave from the Department of Education and this study is part of a Masters of Education Studies Program at NTU.

I hope that this information is sufficient and look forward to a positive response to my request in due course. Any suggestions you may have for improvements to the questionnaire will be welcomed. If necessary I can be reached at home on 412406 or by fax 896363.

Thanking you in anticipation
Yours Sincerely

PAT BEATTIE

PS Gillian Dadswell has kindly provided me with a list of NTOC officers who are currently working in literacy programs on communities.
APPENDIX 3: Letter to Batchelor College

6 Lovegrove Street
Ludmilla
Darwin 0820
8th July 1993

David McLay
Acting Principal
Batchelor College

Dear David,

Following introductory approaches to Ron Stanton, Ailsa Purdon and Denise Walsh I am writing to request permission to survey staff members currently involved in teaching English literacy (particularly reading comprehension) to adult Aboriginal students from non-urban centres. This includes courses where improving students’ reading skills is the major focus or is an important supplementary focus. The survey would involve approaching lecturers, tutors and DEET tutors involved in the Education, Community Studies, Health and CALL faculties and asking if they would be willing to be involved.

It is my hope that the findings of the study will have considerable interest and practical application for adult educators and that this will, of course, ultimately benefit students. I am currently on full-time study leave from the Department of Education and this study is part of a Masters of Education Studies Program at NTU.

As you will see, the questionnaire I have developed (attached) asks about details of current classroom practice in the teaching of English and literacy, particularly the treatment of reading (or discourse) comprehension. Responses from the questionnaire will be analysed to build up a profile of the current practice of the teachers in the sample in order that a) successful (and unsuccessful) strategies can be shared and b) other strategies recommended as a result of the latest theories of discourse comprehension.

It is my intention eventually to make the results of this study widely available so that it can inform adult literacy programs and support adult educators. The study will eventually be available through the Northern Territory University, or the NT Council for Adult Literacy, or from myself.

Both Ron and Ailsa have suggested that I come down on the 20th July when all the lecturers and tutors will be available, and distribute the questionnaire to relevant people.
I trust that this meets with your approval.

I hope that this information is sufficient and look forward to a positive response to my request in due course. I would hope that the exercise will be one with mutually beneficial outcomes. Any suggestions you may have for improvements to the questionnaire will be welcomed. If necessary I can be reached at home on 412406 or by fax 896363.

Yours Sincerely

PAT BEATTIE
Dear Les,

I am writing to request your permission to approach members of your staff to ask them if they would be willing to take part in a survey about the teaching of English/literacy, in particular, those who teach English/literacy to adult Aboriginal students from non-urban centres, either as the major focus of the course, or as a supplementary focus. Attached is a copy of the questionnaire which I would like to have completed.

It is my hope that the findings of the study will have considerable interest and practical application for adult educators and that this will, of course, ultimately benefit students. I am currently on full-time study leave from the Department of Education and this study is part of a Masters of Education Studies Program at NTU.

As you will see, the questionnaire I have developed (attached) asks about details of current classroom practice in the teaching of English and literacy, particularly the treatment of reading (or discourse) comprehension. Responses from the questionnaire will be analysed to build up a profile of the current practice of the teachers in the sample in order that a) successful (and unsuccessful) strategies can be shared and b) other strategies recommended as a result of the latest theories of discourse comprehension.

It is my intention eventually to make the results of this study widely available so that it can inform adult literacy programs and support adult educators. The study will eventually be available through the Northern Territory University, or the NT Council for Adult Literacy, or from myself.

I hope that this information is sufficient and look forward to a positive response to my request in due course. I would hope that the exercise will be mutually beneficial. Any suggestions you may have for improvements to the questionnaire will be welcomed. Could you please supply me with the names of staff members who would be appropriate? If necessary I can be reached at home on 412406 or by fax 896363.

Thanking you in anticipation
Yours Sincerely

PAT BEATTIE
APPENDIX 5: Letter to CAIS

6 Lovegrove Street
Ludmilla
Darwin 0820
Ph 412406

13th July 1993

Dear Isaac,

I am writing to request your permission to approach members of your staff with a view to asking them if they would be willing to take part in a survey about the teaching of English/literacy. I am interested in particular, in those staff members who teach English/literacy to adult Aboriginal students from non-urban centres, either as the major focus of the course, or as a supplementary focus. Attached is a copy of the questionnaire which I would like to have them complete.

As you will see, the questionnaire I have developed (attached) asks about details of current classroom practice in the teaching of English and literacy, particularly the treatment of reading (or discourse) comprehension. Responses from the questionnaire will be analysed to build up a profile of the current practice of the teachers in the sample in order that a) successful (and unsuccessful) strategies can be shared and b) other strategies recommended as a result of the latest theories of discourse comprehension.

I have spoken briefly to Bill Langlands who indicated that there are about five staff members in this situation. He himself expressed support for the ideas behind the survey and felt that CAIS might benefit as a result.

It is my intention to make the results of this study widely available so that it can inform adult literacy programs and support adult educators. A copy of the study itself will eventually be available through the Northern Territory University, or the NT Council for Adult Literacy, or from myself.

I hope that this information is sufficient and look forward to a positive response to my request in due course. Any suggestions you may have for improvements to the questionnaire will be welcomed. If necessary I can be reached at home on 412406 or by fax 896363.

Thanking you in anticipation
Yours Sincerely

PAT BEATTIE
APPENDIX 6: Letter to IAD

6 Lovegrove Street
Ludmilla
Darwin 0820
Ph 412406
8th July 1993

Ms D. Maidment
Co-ordinator of Courses
Institute for Aboriginal Development
PO Box 2531
Alice Springs

Dear Deborah,

Following our telephone conversation I am forwarding a copy of the questionnaire about the teaching of English/literacy which I have developed and which I would like to have appropriate members of staff from your organisation complete, in particular those who teach English/literacy to adult Aboriginal students from non-urban centres, either as the title of the course itself, or as part of another course.

My details are as follows. I am currently enrolled in the Master of Education Program at the Northern Territory University and on full-time study leave from the Department of Education. My study is being undertaken in the interests of supporting teachers of English literacy (and ultimately their students) in the challenging task with which they are faced.

The teaching of English literacy to Aboriginal people has long been a personal interest of mine through my involvement in Homeland Centre education (curriculum development) in the Northern Territory over the last ten years. I also currently hold the position of secretary to the Northern Territory Council for Adult Literacy, and members there (from across the Territory) also perceive a real need for research in this area.

As you will see, the questionnaire I have developed (attached) seeks to ascertain details of current classroom practice in the teaching of English and literacy, particularly the treatment of reading (or discourse) comprehension. Responses will be analysed to build up a profile of the current practice of the teachers in the selected sample in order that this information can be shared. Successful (and unsuccessful) strategies will be highlighted and strategies which are recommended as a result of the latest theories of discourse comprehension will be described for interested educators. The study will be eventually available through the Northern Territory University or the NT Council for Adult Literacy.

I trust that this information is sufficient and look forward to a positive response to my request in due course. I would also be grateful if you could supply me with the names of the particular staff members who fall within the scope of my study as I would like to speak to them personally to ascertain their willingness to be involved and convey my appreciation in person.

If necessary I can be reached at the above address on 089 412406 or by fax 896363.

Thanking you in anticipation
Yours Sincerely

PAT BEATTIE
Dear

RE: A SAMPLING OF ADULT LITERACY PRACTICE IN NON-URBAN SETTINGS IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

I am most anxious to receive your response to the above questionnaire and realise that the timeline I have set, given your other commitments, may have been too short for you. Accordingly I am now extending the last date for receipt of responses to Friday, 3rd September. I trust that this will allow you to complete the questionnaire to your own satisfaction.

I am already encouraged by the responses I have received and can see that a helpful body of information could be constructed from the wide ranging experiences and observations of the adult educators in the sample, including yourself. Obviously the greater the response, the more valid these observations become. I would urge you therefore to return the questionnaire as soon as possible, completing it to the best of your ability, in the light of the experience you have had.

Thanking you in anticipation,

PAT BEATTIE
17th August
Dear survey respondent,

I am sending you a summary of the data provided by the respondents who completed the questionnaire. This is as much as I have completed so far. I am still in the process of analysing your responses to the text but will forward that to you in due course. I have also included a summary of some of the strategies for working with text that I have come across in my reading.

I would be grateful if you would read through my summary of the findings and check to see if it reflects your response fairly and accurately. This may not mean that you have actually been quoted, but that, in general, it is an accurate reflection of your experience.

I would be interested in hearing from you if you wish to question anything or add something to the summary. You can get in touch with me by telephoning me at work (896168) or at home (412406).

Once again, thank you for making the time to take part in the survey,

Yours Sincerely

PAT BEATTIE

PS Apologies for the size of the text, but I'm saving paper!
PPS I am including what I have done on the text analysis.
APPENDIX 9: What lexical chains help identify the main threads of the discourse?

**JAWOYN PLAN MOVE INTO TOURIST TRADE**

**Territory Aborigines** are going into business in a big way and look set to become some of the NT economy's main players.

The Jawoyn Association last night announced plans to enter the tourism industry at Katherine in a joint venture with Travel North.

From May 1993 the Jawoyn will hold a 50 per cent stake with Travel North in the camping ground and boat tours in Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park.

As a result the association will buy out the boat tours currently operated by the Queensland-based Australia Frontier Holidays.

This news comes in the wake of a recent announcement that a central Australian Aboriginal group has entered into a joint venture with Toyota car dealership at Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Mitsubishi.

An announcement is also expected at any time that the Jawoyn have entered into a huge joint partnership with a major Territory company to build the Mt Todd Zapopan mine facilities.

**Key:** The actors (Aboriginal people)
The Action (actively engaged)
The field of operation (the world of business)
APPENDIX 10: How are the the propositions in the text arranged?

JAWOYN PLAN MOVE INTO TOURIST TRADE

WHO? Territory Aborigines IS DOING WHAT? are going into business HOW? in a big way and [WHO?] IS ABOUT TO BE look set to become IN WHAT STATE OF BEING? some of the NT economy's main players.

WHO? The Jawoyn Association WHEN? last night DID WHAT? announced plans WHICH? to enter the tourism industry at Katherine in a joint venture with Travel North.

WHEN? From May 1993 WILL WHO? the Jawoyn HAVE will hold WHAT? a 50 per cent stake with Travel North in the camping ground and boat tours in Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park.

As a result WHO? the association WILL DO WHAT? will buy out the boat tours WHICH? currently operated by the Queensland-based Australia Frontier Holidays.

WHAT? This news IS OCCURRING comes WHEN? in the wake of a recent announcement WHICH? that a central Australian Aboriginal group has entered into a joint venture with Toyota car dealership at Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Mitsubishi.

WHAT? An announcement IS ABOUT TO OCCUR is also expected WHEN? at any time WHICH? that the Jawoyn have entered into a huge joint partnership with a major Territory company to build the Mt Todd Zapopan mine facilities.
APPENDIX 11: What are the major propositions within the text?

MACROPROPOSITION

[JAWOYN PLAN MOVE INTO TOURIST TRADE]

PROPOSITION 1 [Territory Aborigines are going into business in a big way] and
PROPOSITION 2 [(they) look set to become some of the NT economy 's main players.]

PROPOSITION 3 [The Jawoyn Association last night announced plans to enter the
tourism industry at Katherine in a joint venture with Travel North.]

PROPOSITION 4 [From May 1993 the Jawoyn will hold a 50 per cent stake with
Travel North in the camping ground and boat tours in Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge)
National Park.]

PROPOSITION 5 [As a result the association will buy out the boat tours currently
operated by the Queensland-based Australia Frontier Holidays.]

PROPOSITION 6 [This news comes in the wake of a recent announcement that a
central Australian Aboriginal group has entered into a joint venture with Toyota car
dealership at Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Mitsubishi.]

PROPOSITION 7 [An announcement is also expected at any time that the Jawoyn
have entered into a huge joint partnership with a major Territory company to build the Mt
Todd Zapopan mine facilities.]

To indicate the enormous number of concepts readers must process in order to comprehend a
text, proposition 3 has been broken down into its constituent concepts. Each concept has been
given a number. Concepts, understood singly, make a totally new concept when combined.
This has been acknowledged in the numbering. The next level of concept, namely the
combination of two or more concepts to make another concept, I have termed a minor
proposition.
APPENDIX 11 Contd

THE CONCEPTS & MINOR PROPOSITIONS within MAJOR PROPOSITION 3

KEY TO SYMBOLS
+ : added to  > : becomes

'The Jawoyn' (1) + 'Association' (2) > 'The Jawoyn Association' (3)
'last' (4) + 'night' (5) > 'last night' (6)
'announced' (7)
'plans' (8) 'enter' (9) ['tourism' (10) + 'industry' (11) > 'the tourism industry' (12)] > 'plans to enter the tourism industry' (13)
'at' (14) + 'Katherine' (15) > 'at Katherine' (16)
'in' (17) 'a' (18) [joint (19) + venture (20) > 'joint venture'] > 'in a joint venture' (21)
'with' (22) + 'Travel North' (33) > 'with Travel North' (34)

Total number of concepts: 34

MINOR PROPOSITIONS WITHIN PROPOSITION 3
'The Jawoyn Association' (1)
'last night' (2)
'announced' (3)
'plans to enter the tourism industry' (4)
'at Katherine' (5)
'in a joint venture' (6)
'with Travel North' (7)

Total number of minor propositions: 7
APPENDIX 12: What are the logical relationships between propositions?

JAWOYN PLAN MOVE INTO TOURIST TRADE

Territory Aborigines are going into business in a big way and look set to become some of the NT economy's main players.

The Jawoyn Association last night announced plans to enter the tourism industry at Katherine in a joint venture with Travel North.

From May 1993 the Jawoyn will hold a 50 per cent stake with Travel North in the camping ground and boat tours in Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park.

As a result the association will buy out the boat tours currently operated by the Queensland-based Australia Frontier Holidays.

This news comes in the wake of a recent announcement that a central Australian Aboriginal group has entered into a joint venture with Toyota car dealership at Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Mitsubishi.

An announcement is ALSO expected at any time that the Jawoyn have entered into a huge joint partnership with a major Territory company to build the Mt Todd Zapopan mine facilities.
APPENDIX 13: What language items must be retrieved by the reader?
(Ellipsis)
The 'missing' item is indicated by []


[Northern] Territory Aborigines are going into business in a big way and [they] look set to become some of the NT economy's main players.

The Jawoyn Association last night announced plans to enter the tourism industry at Katherine in a joint venture with Travel North.

From May 1993 the Jawoyn will hold a 50 per cent stake with Travel North in the camping ground and boat tours in Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park.

As a result the association will buy out the boat tours [which are] currently operated by the Queensland-based Australia Frontier Holidays.

This news comes in the wake of a recent announcement that a central Australian Aboriginal group has entered into a joint venture with Toyota car dealership at Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Mitsubishi.

An announcement is also expected at any time that the Jawoyn have entered into a huge joint partnership with a major Territory company to build the Mt Todd Zapopan mine facilities.
APPENDIX 14: What grammatical clues situate the action of the text in time, for the reader? (Deixis)

The Reader must use the lexical references in the text to situate the action correctly in time:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEXICAL REFERENCE IN THE TEXT</th>
<th>TIME STATED OR IMPLIED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>plan move 1a are going 1b</td>
<td>1. Now, that is the 1990s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>look set to become 1c</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>announced 2a last night 2b</td>
<td>2. 27th April 1993 (the date of the Jawoyn Association's announcement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This news comes 3a</td>
<td>3. 28th April 1993 (the date of publication)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recent 4a has entered into 4b</td>
<td>4. The recent past (unspecified); April 1993? &gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have entered into 4c</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will hold 5a will buy out 5b</td>
<td>5. Near future; May 1993 (now the past)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is expected 5c</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to build 6a</td>
<td>6. Longer term future (now present/past?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grammatical items encoding time: verbal groups, adjective, prepositional phrase of time.
APPENDIX 15: What grammatical clues situate the action in space for the reader? (Deixis)

Items from the text which indicate location:

**LEXICAL REFERENCE IN THE TEXT** | **LOCATION STATED OR IMPLIED**
---|---
Territory Aborigines 1a | 1. Northern Territory
NT economy 1b | 
central Australian Aboriginal group 1c | 
Alice Springs 1d | 
Tennant Creek Mitsubishi 1e | 
Queensland-based Australia Frontier Holidays 2a | 2. Queensland
NT News 3a | 3. Darwin
at Katherine 4a | 4. Katherine
Ntamiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park 4b | 5. Katherine region
Mt Todd 4c | 

Grammatical items encoding location in space:

- proper nouns (place names)
- adjectives
- prepositional phrase of location.
APPENDIX 16: What items point the reader to information previously referred to within the text? (anaphoric reference)

<JAWOYN>1 PLAN MOVE INTO TOURIST TRADE

<Territory Aborigines>1a are going into business in a big way and look set to become some of the NT economy's main players.

<<The Jawoyn Association>1b last night announced plans to enter the tourism industry at Katherine in a joint venture with Travel North.>3

From May 1993 <the Jawoyn>1c will hold a 50 per cent stake with Travel North in the camping ground and <boat tours in Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park>2.

As a result <the association>1d will buy out <the boat tours>2a currently operated by the Queensland-based Australia Frontier Holidays.

<This news>3a comes in the wake of a recent announcement that a central Australian Aboriginal group has entered into a joint venture with Toyota car dealership at Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Mitsubishi.

An announcement is also expected at any time that <the Jawoyn>1e have entered into a huge joint partnership with a major Territory company to build the Mt Todd Zapopan mine facilities.

KEY
1. The Jawoyn
2. The boat tours
3. The plans
APPENDIX 17: What items point readers to knowledge outside the text? (exophoric reference).

**JAWOYN PLAN MOVE INTO TOURIST TRADE**

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As a result the association will buy out the boat tours currently operated by the Queensland-based Australia Frontier Holidays.

This news comes in the wake of a recent announcement that a central Australian Aboriginal group has entered into a joint venture with Toyota car dealership at Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Mitsubishi.

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*FOR EXAMPLE:*

1 Readers need to be aware that this means the management of NT's resources—that land, people, animals, minerals, businesses etc are all considered to be resources which represent actual or potential wealth; that currency is generated through income from tourism, cattle, mining and the production of goods; that economic activities include borrowing, lending, buying, selling, speculating and investing; and that the currency is cash.*
APPENDIX 18: How are the ideas in the text treated?—'Thingification', spatialisation and anthropomorphism (grammatical metaphor)

JAWOYN PLAN MOVE INTO TOURIST TRADE

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As a result the association will buy out the boat tours currently operated by the Queensland-based Australia Frontier Holidays.

This news comes in the wake of a recent announcement that a central Australian Aboriginal group has entered into a joint venture with Toyota car dealership at Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Mitsubishi.

An announcement is also expected at any time that the Jawoyn have entered into a huge joint partnership with a major Territory company to build the Mt Todd Zappopan mine facilities.
APPENDIX 19: What are the major discourses which appear in the text?

**JAWOYN PLAN MOVE INTO TOURIST TRADE**

by Frank Alcorta

Territory Aborigines are going into business in a big way and look set to become some of the NT economy's main players.

The Jawoyn Association last night announced plans to enter the tourism industry at Katherine in a joint venture with Travel North.

From May 1993 the Jawoyn will hold a 50 per cent stake with Travel North in the camping ground and boat tours in Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park.

The association will buy out the boat tours currently operated by the Queensland-based Australia Frontier Holidays.

Nitmiluk National Park Board of Management chairman Robert Lee said last night that the deal, to be financed through a commercial loan to the Jawoyn, was 'proof that the Jawoyn people are committed to economic development that will benefit the entire region'.

He said it has long been the ambition of the Jawoyn to 'break away from the days of enforced dependence on handouts (and) the days when Aboriginal people were thought to be good for nothing'.

'We've worked hard for this. It's a great day for the Jawoyn people, and a great day for the Katherine region,' Mr Lee said.

He said everyone currently employed at Nitmiluk had been offered a job.

The Jawoyn, through Nitmiluk Pty Ltd, are expected to be able to pay back the commercial loan from ATSIC over five years, including a buy out of shares that will be held by ATSIC in years

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three to five. From year six onwards, the Jawoyn will own their share outright.

Expected

This news comes in the wake of a recent announcement that a central Australian Aboriginal group has entered into a joint venture with Toyota car dealership at Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Mitsubishi.

The Aboriginal group is the Central Australian Aboriginal Investment Corporation.

An announcement is also expected at any time that the Jawoyn have entered into a huge joint partnership with a major Territory company to build the Mt Todd Zapopan mine facilities.

KEY TO MAJOR DISCOURSES:
1. The Discourse of ACTION
2. The Discourse of BUSINESS
APPENDIX 20: What are the minor discourses which appear in the text?

JAWOYN PLAN MOVE INTO TOURIST TRADE

by Frank Alcorta

Territory Aborigines are going into business in a big way and look set to become some of the NT economy's main players.

The Jawoyn Association last night announced plans to enter the tourism industry at Katherine in a joint venture with Travel North.

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The Aboriginal group is the Central Australian Aboriginal Investment Corporation.

An announcement is also expected at any time that the Jawoyn have entered into a huge joint partnership with a major Territory company to build the Mt Todd Zapopan mine facilities.

KEY TO MINOR DISCOURSES:
1. Discourse of Journalism
2. Discourse of Approval or Paternalism or Racism
3. Discourse of Approval
4. Discourse of Sport or Gambling or The Game
5. Discourse of Partnership or Sharing or Equality
6. Discourse of Gambling or Mining
7. Discourse of Justification or Self-defense
8. Discourse of Sharing or Philanthropy
9. Discourse of Fulfilment
10. Discourse of Enslavement or Imprisonment
11. Discourse of Oppression
12. Discourse of History, Past Wrongs
13. Discourse of Celebration, Looking Out for Others
14. Discourse of Looking Out for People

NB Note how most of the sub-Discourses or 'minor' Discourses of the text appear in the section which begins 'Nitmiluk National Park Board of Management ...' and ends ... 'had been offered a job'.

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APPENDIX 21: What Discourses are in contention in the text?

This text lies within the wider Discourse of media. It is an example of the genre: 'newspaper article'. In our society the function of 'the media' is to turn the spotlight on particular people or events and comment on their 'performance' on the stage of local, regional or world events. Time is brief and each actor must make his/her impact, dynamically and succinctly because others are clamouring for their turn in the limelight.

The characteristics of this genre are reasonably well known. The day's events are presented to create maximum impact through the use of layout, size of print and size of column, word choice in the headline and the selective use of illustration (in this case there was none). A popularly held notion is that a newspaper provides its readers with 'the news of the day', that the newspaper 'contains' information and simply 'conveys' that information to its readers. In fact, of course, a newspaper journalist has the power (within editorial limits) to put others 'on the stage', to decide who has a turn in the limelight, to decide which Discourses will be given a hearing and how a particular item of news will be presented.

Journalistic writing at this level of 'popular' newspaper generally consists of syntactically simple language structures—in this text sentences have the surface form of single clauses. Stories are usually brief (the reader is assumed not to want, or to be incapable of digesting, extended text\(^1\)), but highly informative. In the text under analysis, as in other examples of the genre, each paragraph is dense with information. Space is of the essence. Typically there are few explicit cohesive markers. These are sacrificed in the interests of economy. The links which are there, are unexpressed but must be inferred nonetheless. Ellipsis is common.

The overall purpose of this particular text is to 'announce' the arrival of Aboriginal people into the business world, in particular the Jawoyn, a group of Aboriginal people from the Katherine region of the Northern Territory. The fact that other Aboriginal groups in the Northern Territory have been involved in business for many years is ignored, possibly for reasons of effect or greater newsworthiness. The major actors of the piece are 'the Jawoyn'. They are engaged in activity throughout the text. While

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\(^1\)Kress calls this 'the realisation of the discursive demands of the reader' (Kress, 1985).
they are positioned within the Discourse of action, the other 'players' are positioned within the Discourse of business (Appendix 13). The impression is one of 'busyness' around the margins in order to enter the Establishment (centre). Other Discourses briefly appear in this text (Appendix 14)—the Discourses of paternalism, of partnership, of buying power, of deal making, of justification, of slavery, of mendicancy, of self affirmation, of fulfilment, of 'looking out for others', of economic 'clout'. They are 'shouted down', however, by the two major Discourses of action and business.

If we ask why this event has been selected as of interest for the audience of the NT News the answer might be that Aboriginal people (as represented by the Jawoyn) are at last being 'good sports'. They are 'doing' rather than simply 'being' or 'being done to' (or 'being given to'). They are entering the field of play and have declared their willingness to abide by the rules of the game (presumably already established since there is no mention of negotiation). In other words they are becoming like 'us' and they are willing to follow 'our' rules. And here we find the third major Discourse present in this text, but it is all but invisible. It is the Discourse of assimilation. Difference is problematic in Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relationships in the Northern Territory. What this text is about is an attempt to eliminate difference. From the point of view of the readers of this newspaper, and judged by the criteria of Western society, the Jawoyn have taken a positive step in the right direction—towards becoming assimilated into the cash economy. The writer clearly welcomes this move, and demonstrates his approval by identifying with the Jawoyn. The article does not open with 'Aborigines from the Northern Territory' but 'Territory' Aborigines—in other words 'our' Aborigines.)

The major Discourses in this text, of action and business, are positioned alongside each other and continue throughout the text. Many of the sub-Discourses have been 'inserted'. They involve only the paragraphs in which the voice of the Jawoyn is 'heard' (and has been selectively edited). These Discourses of justification, of slavery, of mendicancy, of self affirmation, of fulfilment, of 'looking out for others' are positioned therefore as sub-Discourses. They are in parenthesis, embedded slightly uneasily, threatening to destroy the harmony of the major partnership of the two Discourses of action and business with their reference to past difference.
There is partial resolution however. The sub-Discourses 'touch' or dialogue with the major Discourses through the sub-Discourse of fulfilment, as revealed by the presence of the word 'ambition'. In one stroke, actors who had been positioned as players in someone else's game, now consciously align themselves with the way in which they are being positioned. They have become proactive, thus transforming themselves from being pawns, or objects of another's gaze, to masters of their own destiny, subjects of their own domain. The Jawoyn have not only entered the tourist industry, they have entered the Discourse of business and declare themselves 'committed to economic development'.

The final section of the text is pure newspaper business. It does not contribute to the Discourses of the text in any meaningful way but is an attempt by the writer, to display how well he is fulfilling his function of gaining access to up-to-date information for the benefit of his readers. It could be described as being a sub-Discourse of the Discourse of media—the Discourse of accessing privileged information.

All Discourses take place within greater Discourses. The Discourses in this text must be 'heard' in relation to Discourses which operate in the local Northern Territory socio-political context. The assimilationist Discourse in this text is unmarked within Northern Territory Discourses; that is, in the Northern Territory context it is 'unremarkable'. It provides a backdrop to many of the articles in this particular newspaper. The other local Discourse which frames many of the articles about Aboriginal moves to be self-determining is the Discourse of fear, particularly where a handover of land to Aboriginal people is involved. The immediate local, historical context of this particular article is that the Jawoyn, against bitter local opposition in the Katherine region, won title to their traditional country, including Katherine Gorge, which they renamed Nitmiluk. In this local Discourse of fear, it is 'understood' that if Aboriginal people gain title to land they will lock Territory business out forever. This local Discourse is actually present in this particular text by virtue of its absence. There is no acknowledgement whatsoever that the main Discourse in this text, action by Aboriginal people to enter into joint ventures with Territory business by using their land for the benefit of their whole region, conflicts with that other, now silent, Discourse of fear and, in fact, refutes it.
APPENDIX 22: Text analysis: a suggested approach for educators

The following strategy for teaching English/literacy through text analysis combines suggestions from the literature, the kind of strategies educators have identified as successful in the non-urban context and the kinds of analyses which are used on the text in this study. Over time, develop the technique which best suits you and your students.

First, select an authentic, relevant text\(^2\) to which students can trace a relationship of some kind. This may mean that the text is one they can expect to encounter in their lives/job; or the author is known to them; or the issue is one that concerns them; or the location or the people in the text are familiar etc. If possible, select a text that is well written and cohesive. If it is long, tackle it in sections. Make sure students understand the language for discussing texts (the metalanguage)—terms such as 'introduction', 'paragraph', 'quotation marks', 'punctuation', 'line' etc—or teach it as you go.

Focus on whole text first. Give some details of its source, the Discourse from which it comes, the writer and establish the purpose for studying it. Assist students to predict the substance of the text from the title, illustrations of any kind, any headings or the initial sentences of paragraphs. Provide any further information which will be essential to making overall meaning of the text. (A brainstorm would reveal how much or how little students know of the topic or the context and therefore what background information needs to be provided.)

The reading
The reading is done sitting around a table together. This emphasises the shared nature of the activity and the close proximity of support. There are several possibilities: the educator can read it while students follow along on their copy of the text—this will allow them to listen to it being read reasonably slowly, in meaningful chunks, with correct intonation; educator and students might all read the text aloud together; each person

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\(^2\)Over time a range of texts should be studied: from texts closer to 'talk' to texts which are more dense; from texts written by students' peers to texts written by published Aboriginal authors to texts written by non-Aboriginal authors.
reads around the table in turn, the educator taking his/her turn as one of the group.

There are some further decisions to be made if students' reading is to be scaffolded sufficiently so that they derive meaning from the text and experience success. If the text is not too difficult, you might decide to read it together first to get an overview of the meaning of the whole text then go back to it section by section. If the text is likely to prove difficult, you might deconstruct it paragraph by paragraph, or even sentence by sentence, as you go.

Read the text several times if necessary.

text-as-texture and the text-as-ideology

Again, depending upon the level of difficulty of this text for students, ask them questions about each sentence which they can answer by quoting directly from the text. (This is to develop their confidence by giving them the opportunity to be successful. It is also focusing on what is there before focusing on what is not there, that is, reading between the lines.) Since ultimately this process is to enable them to be writers, ask these questions in such a way as to make them think about the writer, for example, 'Who does the writer introduce us to in this sentence?', 'What happened?', 'How does the writer set the scene in this sentence? 'Which word tells us how the writer feels about what happened?

Make sure students are making connections. Continually ask 'Who is 'he', 'she', 'it', 'them'?'

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3 This is in some ways the most desirable approach but be aware that being able to read English text aloud is not necessarily an indication of comprehension and in fact focusing on the skills required to read aloud can inhibit the reader from attending to meaning.

4 If the text in its present form is inaccessible, yet is important for various reasons, rewrite it. This could consist of unpacking it and therefore making it longer, or editing it considerably as well as simplifying the language and unpacking the sentence structures. In either case it will be necessary to maintain the cohesiveness and at least some of the key terminology of the original. Use the new version for subsequent activities but return to the original eventually to show students how much more they can now tackle.

5 Difficulty with decoding should not stop students engaging with the text. The process must be scaffolded for them every step of the way until the text (or a part of it) becomes so familiar they can address more sophisticated aspects of meaning. Those students who have difficulty with decoding could spend more time initially in decoding practice, e.g., after several readings ask students to find a particular word (or phrase)—give them a description of it related to its shape or middle or end sound. Highlight different words or phrases in some way, for example, cup your hand around it and ask students to read. Ask students to show you where a particular word or phrase is located in the text. Cut up a paragraph into sentences and ask students to reconstruct it. Cut up a sentence and ask students to reconstruct it. Choose increasingly complex sentences to challenge students. Use the text for a cloze activity or dictation.
Identify in advance any 'picture' words (words which suggest an image that the writer is using to communicate an idea or an experience to the reader), for example, 'key' ideas, 'core' modules. Discuss these with students as they are met in the text. Find ways to share these images. Draw pictures or get students to draw pictures. If this image is crucial to the Discourse students are learning, take time at some stage to negotiate its meaning(s): gesture, act out, report back to each other from small group discussions etc. Discuss how this image helps with meaning in this sentence.

Look at any 'big words' in the text more closely. As the reading proceeds highlight any words which have prefixes or suffixes. Explain the Greek/Latin connection (if appropriate) and discuss the meaning of this morpheme in this particular word. Briefly, give (or ask students to suggest) other words that they know which have the same beginning or ending (and the same meaning). Identify any small words within large words to assist with meaning, for example, 'similar' inside assimilation, 'value' inside evaluation. Quickly build up some others on the w/board—valuable, valued, evaluate etc. (This makes connections for students to words they may already know but not have linked together in their minds.)

Draw students' attention to the writer's use of a logical connective—'As a result', 'although', 'however' etc. With them, identify the ideas which are being connected and in what relationship to each other these ideas have been placed.

Draw students' attention to any embedded clauses—'who lives down the lane', 'which led nowhere' etc. Point out that the sentence can be read without these but by using embedded clauses more information can be provided. ('Who' indicates person, 'which' indicates 'thing'.)

Check to see if the writer has used ellipsis and physically 'add' the missing text if this would be helpful for some students.

At some stage draw students' attention to punctuation and how it has been used to assist meaning.

Later you can make students aware of the thematic organisation of the whole and what function each paragraph has in the overall scheme of the passage. Ask students to indicate any parts of the text are still problematic for them.
Text-as-discourse and text-as-construction- of-reality

Once students' reading of the text is more confident, examine it for the presence (and absence) of Discourses. Develop questions which focus the activity. 'What kind of Discourses are in contention here?' Whose voice is being heard in this text? Whose voice is absent? Other focus questions suggested by Kress might be useful: 'Why is this topic being written about?'; How is this topic being written about?'; 'What other ways of writing about this topic are there?

Discuss with students how the writer of the text is positioning them as readers and how they feel about that positioning. Sometimes readers are angry with the writer of a text but they are unable to articulate fully just how the writer has managed to achieve that effect. If appropriate, a response to the text can be constructed or other action taken to address this anger.

Gradually students will become familiar with the process of text deconstruction and develop the metalanguage to critically analyse a text. Once they experience what kind of reading this approach can provide, students' thoughts on the desirability of discourse analysis can be canvassed.

Further practice

Students might be asked to practise their English written skills through practise exercises developed from the text: plurals; subject/verb agreement; word order; sentence combining using specific logical connectives; writing sentences using key terms from the text; work on prefixes and suffixes etc. They might be asked to transform the written language of some part of the text into language more suited to the oral mode, or to turn a direct quotation into reported speech. The whole text, or a part of it could be paraphrased and cloze passages created by deleting different types of item each time (prepositions, verbs, logical connectors, pronouns etc). Speed copying could be practised using the text.

While initially this approach may appear time consuming and slow, ultimately it should provide students with the skills to approach a text much more confidently and effectively, equipped with greater insight into the writing (and reading) process involved in deconstructing an English text.