



Australian Government

**Quality Teacher
Programme**



Self-access module 1

**A Critical Literacy Approach to Intercultural Language
Teaching and Learning**

RCLCE Research Centre
for
Languages
and
Cultures Education



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A Critical Literacy Approach to Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning

This is a self-access learning module.

It is designed as an additional pathway for exploring intercultural language learning and teaching. It refers to and builds upon modules provided as part of Phase 3 of the Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning in Practice (ILTLP) project and assumes familiarity with the knowledge and skills gained through participation in the project. It is not intended as a stand-alone professional learning programme. It is recommended that you work through this module individually, relating it both to the materials explored in Phase 3 of the ILTLP project and to your work with your own students.

Product warning: Don't be disheartened at your initial skim through!

At first sight, the module may well look 'text-heavy' and user-unfriendly. There *is* a lot of 'explanatory talk'; but there are a number of key concepts and principles which have to be explained and connected to each other in order for you to see how Critical Literacy works and in order to consolidate your own theoretical frame. Take it slowly, pace yourself in such a way that you have plenty of time to do the practical exercises along the way; and feel free to take detours from the module – for example to explore further examples of different texts or to approach the exercise provided in an alternative way (possibly one that connects more directly with what you already do). Try to keep your existing practice and knowledge base on a parallel track as you work through the module; the points of connection are important. Factor in good reflective time.

You may find it more productive to work through the module with colleagues. The kind of cross-pollination which would happen along the way would be great collaborative professional learning.

Overview of module

This module introduces you to a Critical Literacy approach to working with language/text, demonstrating the relevance of this approach to the intercultural language teaching and learning project. The module has four components and moves from a conceptual introduction to practical demonstration and exploration and back once more to a reflective, theorised frame.

- **Introduction to Critical Literacy:** The first component introduces the theoretical frame and key concepts associated with a Critical Literacy approach, identifying language and communication as social and cultural practice and connecting with current pedagogical agendas of multiliteracies, critical enquiry-based learning and education for intercultural competence.
- **Making the connection – Critical Literacy and the Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning in Practice (ILTLP) Project:** The second component of the module explores how Critical Literacy strategies contribute to the achievement of ILTLP teaching and learning objectives. You will make connections between these approaches and intercultural language learning, drawing on the understandings you have been developing throughout this project in relation to the inter-connectedness of language and culture, of language and identity, and of texts, contexts, meanings and representations.

- **Critical discourse analysis and inter/intra-cultural learning:** The third component of the module introduces you to some strategies and tools for critical text analysis which help you to identify how language works to construct particular 'versions of the world' (meaning, representation, readings). Working with the concept of **discourse**, you will undertake a first exercise in **discourse analysis**: exploring texts as cultural constructions, which not only 'reflect' cultural meaning, but are also implicated in the 'making' of this meaning.
- **Languages, cultures, texts: the making of particular meanings:** The final synthesising component of the module moves from analysis of text in the shared medium of English to a practical exploration of how texts in different languages 'construct' culture and of how culture in turn shapes texts. You will work with texts of your own choice in the target language you teach, examples of ones that you use with your students or that you yourself 'consume' as target language texts. By conducting a simple but systematic critical discourse analysis you will identify how texts provide valuable 'language-culture' data. This practical experience will make it easier for you to make sense of the theoretical concepts discussed earlier in the Module. This will then provide a springboard for you to begin to think about ways of incorporating Critical Literacy strategies into your own program.

Module objectives

In this module you will

- Explore the notion of **language as social practice** and work out a connection between this understanding and intercultural language teaching and learning
- Develop a working understanding of the principles which underpin a Critical Literacy approach and of its usefulness in your teaching context
- Develop an understanding of the concept of **discourse** and of **critical discourse analysis**
- Explore the application of a Critical Literacy approach to textual experience and analysis in relation to different linguistic and cultural codes
- Reflect upon the process of working through this module and upon ways in which it will contribute to the intercultural literacy dimension of your practice.

Component 1: Introduction to Critical Literacy

1. Theoretical model: Language as social and cultural practice

As teachers of languages/cultures, our practice is shaped by our theoretical understanding of what it is we're involved in: i.e. of what language is, what culture is, what teaching is, what learning is; of the nature of the interaction happening in our classrooms. We may not always articulate these understandings easily or coherently, or even think of them as 'theory'. Some come from 'official' theoretical input from pre-service teacher education, professional development workshops, professional journals; but a lot of what we understand and believe comes from our own experiential knowledge – what we have deduced from experience, both as language learners ourselves and then as language teachers. This experiential knowledge is often intuitive and unconscious; but it influences significantly the decisions we make in our practice; just as significantly as the 'received knowledge' we acquire through education and professional development. Effective practice appears to be the successful, ongoing interaction between 'received' and 'experiential' knowledge: what we 'know', theoretically, is impacted on by what we experience in our own practice, which then in turn re-informs what we 'know' theoretically. Keeping this dialogue going between theory and practice is what we aim for when working towards effective **reflective practice**.

In the first Module of the ILTLP Conference materials (*The intercultural in language teaching and learning*), we invited you to consider your current understanding of language, of culture and of the relationship between the two. Your responses would have varied, reflecting different emphases and interests and also different orientations and experience. Traditionally, we have tended to focus primarily on language as **grammatical system** – as several interconnected systems in fact (phonological, lexical, syntactic); and programs have been shaped around acquiring competence in these various systems. The 'culture' which accompanied this traditional approach to language learning was – as we discussed in Module 1 – the visible, essentialised version of facts, artefacts, practices; history, literature, food, music, celebrations and rituals.

We have also traditionally thought about language – and language learning - as **cognitive process**: something that happens inside the individual head which involves input, processing, sorting, classifying, internalising and - eventually – outputting. Significant progress in language acquisition research studies has consolidated a strong theoretical base for thinking about language as cognitive process, helping us to understand more about learner variables, learning styles and language acquisition stages. This is certainly a key part of the process.

More recently, we have moved to focusing on language as **social interaction**: as something which happens between people: the shared process of making meaning. As Halliday first argued, coming into language – first languages – happens through the all-important processes of being socialized into our world; of 'learning how to mean'; and this meaning is always made in the context of specific, 'meaningful' social situations and interactions. We have fore-grounded this dimension of language in the ILTLP professional learning programme modules: showing how language-in-action plays the pivotal role in shaping the kinds of meaning made in particular contexts, relationships, circumstances. This making of meaning, in fact, is very close to what we mean by the shaping of culture.

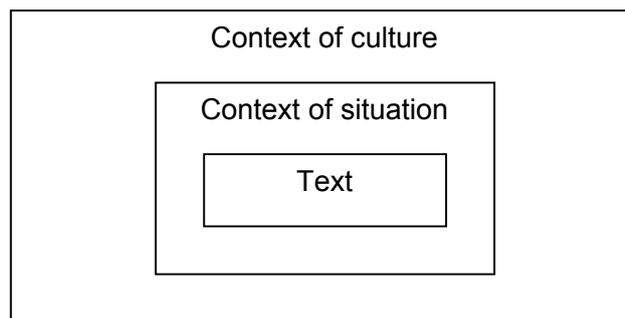
This **social interactionist** account of language and language acquisition takes us away from any notion of language as a neutral message system – a conduit which transmits fixed meanings from sender to receiver. Language is rarely neutral; and meaning rarely fixed. When we speak, write, or use any other mode of communication, we make choices which are rarely random. We construct our messages according to our intentions, our constraints

and possibilities, our roles and relationships. This is what we mean when we talk about language being **social practice**. It is the most powerful component of social process and practice at individual, collective and institutional levels.

2. Text

The term 'text' is useful here, and is central to the Critical Literacy approach. Think about all language, all communication, all interaction, message or meaning making as **text**. Some of you will associate 'text' only with written text; but in the sociolinguistic ('language as social practice') model, text refers equally to speech, signs, performance, visual messages – to any instance of meaning-making. We live in what are often described as 'text-saturated' times, continuously bombarded by texts of all types, intentions, formats and modalities; from T.V ads to video clips, to discussion forums, gossip sessions with friends, newspaper editorials, formal educational lectures and textbooks, multiply-mediated, variously delivered. We are in a constant state of text processing as well as producing.

The following diagram is a simple visual representation of how this notion of **text** sits in the central position of the model of language as social practice:



No text happens in a vacuum. It is constructed in a particular situation and in a particular cultural context; and these two key variables determine its nature: lexically, syntactically, rhetorically and in terms of all those other shaping elements which bring it into its particular being (e.g. such as intonation, pitch, gestures).

Interaction 1

- Select any commonly-encountered communicative act: e.g. an apology, an invitation, a greeting, a letter, a love song.
- Now create 3 different texts, three different versions, which 'behave' quite differently linguistically. They can be written, spoken, mimed. At this point, you will need to imagine both the **situation** and the **cultural context**: an apology, for example, will look/sound quite different if you are making it to your best friend on the phone than it will if you are making it to your Head Teacher in relation to an error in submitting student assessment scores. The text you construct will involve different lexical choices, different syntax, different intonation patterns etc. Notice how easily you make these choices – drawing from your largely unconscious repertoire of communicative competence. And notice the nature of the differences.
- Finally, think about how the three texts you have created would be delivered in parallel contexts of situation in the culture/language you are teaching. What differences will there be?

There are many more elaborated and sophisticated models for describing the language-culture connection, but this simple three-framed model is a good basic working model for thinking about the text-context relationship which sits at the core of both the intercultural language learning project and the Critical Literacy approach.

3. Literacy as Social Practice

Before moving on to explore critical literacy, it is important to establish that literacy – like language – is also **social and cultural practice**; it too can be thought of as involving cultural products, practices and processes. Unlike oracy development, our first stage of language acquisition, which in normal circumstances happens easily through the usual processes of socialization, literacy is a 'learned technology'; not always easily learned, not always on offer to all people, and shaped in different ways in different contexts and situations. In the Australian teaching context, where literacy is an established 'right' of all, there is a close interconnection between language and literacy; some educators and researchers in fact not recognizing the distinction.

Approaches to the teaching of literacy have changed radically in the last two decades and continue to be contested and debated. Current debates between educators, politicians and community members around literacy education clearly illustrate the relationship between literacy, education, ideology and power relations. Literacy is indeed an example of 'cultural capital'. The current push in some quarters to revert to traditional models of reproductive, content-based learning and skills-based literacy education, and to cut back on enquiry-based, learner-centred, critically-oriented models is indicative of the relationship of literacy education to broader cultural processes. What kinds of literacy practices are considered essential, appropriate or worthwhile reflect different 'situated perspectives': which are never too far removed from broader cultural value systems, attitudes and investments. Literacy has always been a key site of cultural contestation and a key indicator of cultural values and

social organisation. Within the broader framework of intercultural literacy, these intersections of perspectives and investments become even more complex.

4. Literacies for New Times

Multiliteracies

The term *multiliteracies* features prominently in current educational discourses. We have moved from the notion of a singular 'literacy', the narrow skills-based model of learning to read and write, to the idea of *multiliteracies*: an acknowledgement that the skills, competencies, knowledge and understandings required to be 'literate' in contemporary culture go well beyond the traditional tasks of reading and writing. Literacy educators talk now of **literacy practices**, acknowledging the wide range of behaviours, knowledge, actions, and practices required for successful navigation of the multiply-mediated and multiply 'modalities' world we now inhabit. Young people moving into the workforce need new, additional skills. The nature of work has changed radically, with more people now employed in information technology and service industries than in more traditional fields of production; and transcultural, global connections are now part of more people's working experience.

The new literacies which have been conceptualised and developed in Australian curriculum reforms and initiatives (e.g. the *New Basics* in Queensland) respond to these changing conditions, economies and social orders. New modes of communication and information involve new modalities, new rhythms and styles of communication, new cultural and intercultural competencies. We are required to negotiate more complex technological interfaces, more varied representation systems. While traditional print literacy is still essential, it is no longer enough. The term *multiliteracies* has been adopted to capture the idea of what we need in order to function effectively in current times. The new social and educational environment requires new knowledge, competencies and orientations.

Literacy educators in many schools and jurisdictions now work to a model developed by Luke and Freebody (1997), the *Four Resources Model of Literacy Practices*, which takes account of this multiplicity of literate practices; a model which is as relevant for the ILTLP project as it is for first-language and literacy work. Elaboration of the multiliteracies agenda has not typically included second and additional language and literacy development to any significant degree, in spite of the fact that intercultural literacy – and the project of shaping young people to be global citizens – should place high priority on additional language learning. With the ILTLP project, we have the opportunity to argue for much broader recognition of the importance of languages education in the mainstream multiliteracies agenda; and for recognition of the points of connection to be made between first and second language literacy development.

The Four Resources Model of Literacy Practices

This model provides an easy way of representing the kinds of resources we need to draw upon to be effective text producers, consumers and analysts: to 'do literacy' effectively in current times and conditions in our first cultural and linguistic codes but also in additional ones. It is a good inclusion in our strategic tool-kit for exploring the language-culture connection.

It describes the four main **roles** we need to be able to enact:

1. Code breaker: the ability to ‘crack the codes’ associated with different languages and literacy systems: i.e. knowing how to **encode** and **decode** (e.g. knowing the alphabet and scripts; understanding how graphemes translate into phonemes and vice versa: knowing that in English ‘ph’ sounds like ‘f’); spelling; punctuation conventions; directionality. Learning this level of decoding and encoding across various systems has always been the core business of traditional literacy education; it is still core business, but no longer sufficient in itself.

2. Meaning maker: as well as decoding text, we need to be able to make sense - or meaning - of what we decode. We refer to this as the **semantic level of literacy practice**. If I give you a simple text from an early reader, you will all manage to both decode (read aloud, for example) and make meaning of it; you’ll know what it’s ‘about’. (*‘Come with me’, says Ben; ‘I can see the dog’. ‘I can see the dog too’, says Dan; ‘Shall we play with the dog?’*) While it may not be engaging or exciting, it’s easy to understand; you have the required semantic resources; and this will be evident in the kinds of stress and intonation you use as you read it aloud. If I give you a text from an advanced level Physics course book, or from a doctoral thesis on French feminist poststructuralist theory, however, you will still be able to decode it, read it out loud, but are less likely to ‘make meaning’ from it; and this imperfect understanding will be evident in your ‘voicing’ of it. Your intonation and phrasing will suggest uncertainty and lack of comprehension or conviction. There are important implications for us as teachers in relation to the need for semantic competence: our students require background knowledge, or **schema**, in order to engage successfully with text, in order to make sense.

Interaction 2:

Which of the following three tasks will you find easiest? Set yourself a 2 minute limit for each one:

1. Compose the text of a typical exchange at a MacDonald’s drive-through.
2. Compose one of the exchanges between the celebrant and the congregation at a Mass celebrated in Latin.
3. Script a common interaction in a local council budget meeting.

This task will have proved the importance of the semantic (‘meaning making’) element of textual practice: if you have the schema – or existing knowledge – which provides the context for the text, you’ll have completed the activity easily. If you haven’t, you’ll have found it very difficult or impossible.

3. Text user: the **pragmatic level of literacy practice**. You may be able to encode/decode successfully, and also have the necessary background knowledge to make meaning of a text; but you also need to know how to **use** it appropriately: in the right place, at

the right time, with the right kind of performance. Many of you will now be thinking **genre**, the core element of the functional grammar approach to working with text. Some of you will already be incorporating a genre approach in your program. While it is most commonly adopted in first-language/literacy programs, it is equally useful in second language teaching and learning; particularly so in exploring the language-culture connection. Genres are notoriously culturally specific; and can be very tricky to master when the cultural frame is unfamiliar. Working with genres is an excellent way-in to exploring how languages and cultures shape and respond to each other.

4. Text analyst: the final level of literacy practice, and the final role of text user identified in this model, is that of **critical analyst:** as text users and producers we need to be able to 'interrogate' text: to read between the lines, to view from a critical distance; to ask the critical questions which identify the intention, purpose and strategies employed by texts. This kind of critical perspective is now recognized as being every bit as important as the other levels of literacy practice. And this is where critical literacy comes into play.

N.B. The Four Resources Model is *not* a developmental one. It's not a case of the first stages of literacy experience focusing on decoding and encoding, then moving on to semantic and pragmatic practice before finally being ready to develop critical skills. The argument that a critical perspective can only be developed once solid literacy skills are in place is sometimes made – particularly in relation to second/additional languages education. These four levels of literacy practice ideally develop simultaneously, from the earliest stages of emergent literacy in both first and additional language experience. Together they shape an orientation to text capable of responding to the power and complexity of changing social, textual and cultural conditions; an orientation which helps to systematize the processes of noticing, comparing and reflecting which frame the ILTLP project.

Why do we need a critical perspective?

The need for a critical purchase on the nature and 'behaviour' of texts has never been more self-explanatory. While the richness, volume and multiplicity of textual forms and experience described earlier is a hugely enabling and enriching cultural phenomenon, providing access to communication forms and experience unimagined just one generation ago, it also poses significant challenges. As consumers of texts, we are continuously being positioned, persuaded, ideologically 'wooned' in ways which are not always obvious or visible. The power of popular media texts such as advertisements is well documented and relatively easy to notice (and potentially to resist). The destructive influence of discourses of 'femininity' on teenage girls' body images, for example, or the systematic textual construction of a new (commoditised and market-driven) cultural category of male – the metro-sexual – are easy examples of this power and capacity of text to influence and to construct 'reality'. A critical orientation to literacy practice helps to develop tools for noticing – and taking a more informed position on – less obvious textual tactics which have equally significant (indeed often more significant) influence.

5. Critical Literacy and the role of the critical text analyst

The 'critical' in Critical Literacy is at times misrepresented or misunderstood. Opponents of the inclusion of Critical Literacy in literacy education argue that it is a 'radical', 'anti-establishment' approach which reflects a specific political position, dedicated to undermining traditional and 'core' educational values. Editorials and letters to editors during recent debates about what constitutes appropriate literacy education show how this argument works. This is missing the point of Critical Literacy. Critical pedagogy in general certainly operates from a reform and transformative agenda, working within equity, access and social justice educational frames; but to tie Critical Literacy into a particular political agenda is to misunderstand the fundamental nature of the project.

It can be traced back to the initial moment of 'liberation pedagogy' associated with the work of Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educationist who published the landmark *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, in 1968, in which he elaborated the model of literacy education as developing the ability to "read" the world. It has been variously developed and shaped since that time, and can be tracked in quite different directions, but the basic premise remains essentially the same: a critical literacy develops the ability to engage actively and critically with texts; to "interrogate" them – asking the kinds of questions which are 'critical' in an investigative rather than a negative or disapproving sense. We will look at the kinds of questions more closely when we discuss discourse analysis later in the module; but this investigative orientation is the core characteristic of a critical literacy approach to text. It encourages students to analyse the conditions of production of texts as well as their own relations with text, modes of information and communication systems; to become more active and agentive, and to notice the connections between text and context, and language and culture, which not only construct particular versions of the world, but also position them – both as producers and consumers of texts – in particular ways. It works from the basis that texts are representational: they construct accounts of things. And it works with systematic ways of analysing and investigating *how* texts do the work they do – and *why*. The Critical Literacy approach acknowledges the fact that our command and understanding of different discourses and modalities determines our relationship with them. The comment is often made, that "discourse has material effects". We will explore this idea further in the third component of this module; and think about how this interrogative approach to text in a different language/culture can contribute to achieving our ILTLP aims.

Component 2: Making the Connection – Critical Literacy and the ILTLP

Working your way through the above discussion of literacy, literacies and critical text analysis, you will certainly have been making connections between these ideas and the ILTLP. In the core modules you explored:

- the inter-relationship of language and culture
- what it means to be an ‘intercultural person’
- the interconnected processes of experience, analysis and reflection needed to both ‘see’ the language-culture relationship and to develop an informed position from which to explore and perform it.

Freire’s (1968) original concept of *praxis* sits well in relation to this last point: the reciprocal relationship between action and reflection – or experience and analysis – which works like a loop, continuously informing itself. Only through engaging in this kind of conscious, dialogic process of analysis-experience-reflection can we become active agents, with possibilities of real intentionality and choice in our relationship with texts.

The Critical Literacy approach in the language classroom is a powerful way of both exploring the language-culture relationship and of developing intercultural literacy/competence. I adopt this approach when working with both TESOL and LOTE students/pre-service teachers, both domestic and international students; and I know that it works. It works because it is systematic, well theorised, and offers practical tools and strategies for analysis which are clear, simple and reproducible. In some respects a Critical Literacy approach is much easier when working with a language-culture which is ‘other’. Our first language and cultural frames are so familiar, so much part of what we take for granted, that it’s notoriously difficult to ‘see’ them. They are just how things are. It takes greater effort to make the familiar strange than it does to make the strange familiar.

To talk theoretically about language-culture is important and necessary; but unless this talk then translates into practical strategies for ‘enacting’ the theory, there is a danger it will remain in abstract, over-generalised and difficult-to-apply shape. The challenge of operationalising new understandings about the nature of language, culture and identity is what drives the ILTLP project. How to *do* what we now *profess* is the challenge. The work completed by teachers in Phase 1 of this project produced some helpful examples but it also demonstrated the difficulties involved in applying theory – especially when it means changing some very established patterns and pedagogical habits.

Critical Literacy offers specific strategies for applying theory to practice in respect to the language-culture connection.

It will be interesting to return to what you have written here at the end of the module and see if you might make changes or additions. You probably came up with some or all of the following points: how you have worded these points will be a good indication of how you are developing your own model to fit your practice in your context, and your own language for talking about all this.

Some points in common...

- Both work from an understanding that language is social and cultural practice
- Both work from a model of culture as involving the various processes, practices, representation systems and value systems which determine how particular groups of people make meaning of experience and structure their social organization
- Both see language and culture as **co-constitutive** (implicated in the making of the other)
- Both see the importance of thinking about the text-context relationship
- Both demonstrate how the 'naming' of something actually provides the 'framing' of it: there are always choices to be made, in response to value systems, attitudes, histories, politics
- Both share an understanding of what is involved in becoming culturally 'literate': in the ILTLP we talk about interculturality and intercultural competence; in Critical Literacy we talk about multiliteracies and critical literacies that recognise 'situated perspectives'
- Both insist on the need to develop the ability to 'read off' texts: to see how and why they are how they are; what choices have gone into making them that way
- Both encourage the development of a reflective and refractive dimension. Many of us who work in the field talk about the process of "making the familiar strange" at the same time as "making the strange familiar". The reading by Celia Roberts gives you a good account of a systematic approach to this which she developed with her pre-service language teachers in the U.K. This captures nicely the two-way, dialogic nature of exploring language-culture: as we explore the new or 'other', we can see the familiar in new ways
- Both acknowledge the 'messiness' of interaction with both text and culture: how we none of us occupy fixed, stable positions; how meaning-making and the position from which we make it is fluid, dynamic, often involving tensions and collisions as well as additions and benefits.

You may feel that some of the above points haven't yet emerged from what has been a brief introduction to Critical Literacy; but hopefully by the time you have completed the next component of the module and worked through some practical analysis you'll be able to return to these listed points of commonality and make more complete sense of each point.

Component 3: Discourse and Discourse Analysis

The key concept which sits at the heart of critical text analysis is that of **discourse**. You may be used to using this term in the traditional linguistics sense of the more extended unit of language which sits above the clause, the sentence, the paragraph; but the sociolinguistic sense of *discourse* is quite different. The educational theorist and linguist James Gee (1991), referring to it as 'discourse with a capital D', defines it as:

A socially accepted association among ways of using language, thinking and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network'. (1991, p.3)

We can think about discourse then as involving these three elements:

- Ways of using language
- Ways of behaving, performing, acting and interacting
- Ways of thinking, valuing, believing etc.

These three elements combine to produce a coherent 'way of being', the whole being greater than the sum of the parts. Language is obviously a core element of discourse, but it is not the whole part. Gee suggests thinking of a discourse as an identity kit, complete with costume and instructions on how to act and talk and think, which we need in order to fit into different social worlds.

He argues that we are all born into what he terms our **primary discourse**: the one we get 'for free': a particular social world, that of our family. We are initiated into its ways of being almost by osmosis. We adopt its habits, its ways of talking and thinking, its social behaviour, its values and attitudes. This primary discourse is powerful and defining.

From this point on, life is about learning additional discourses: what Gee (1991) terms **secondary discourses**. We move in and out of them, adapting how we behave, speak and think about things. Some come very easily, others are hard-won. Each involves a period of apprenticeship, trial and error, learning how to get it right. Sometimes we feel like real insiders to particular discourses, comfortable and confident; other times we feel as if we'll never crack the code, always remaining outsiders or novices. First explorations of secondary discourses are often fairly close to the home discourse; although this is not true for everyone. Some children slide seamlessly into the discourses of schooling, for example, having been well prepared at home for the kinds of things that will happen there; others find themselves in totally alien worlds, where teachers ask questions to which they already know the answer, for example; for some children this is strange behaviour. We develop our social and cultural competence via the various discourses we encounter and are apprenticed into - or are excluded from; because discourses always involve both inclusions and exclusions; insiders and outsiders. In this sense, they are like clubs.

DISCOURSE SO FAR....

To summarise what we have identified so far as characteristics of discourses:

- They are a core part of how we identify ourselves in social groups and function in social worlds
- Apart from our primary discourse, they are learned: not always consciously, and often with some degree of effort
- They involve language, behaviour and values. For a discourse to be coherent and to 'work', these three elements need to be aligned
- They involve inclusions and exclusions: 'membership'
- They frame texts: some texts are clearly coming out of a single discourse, others weave between discourses.

An additional significant characteristic of discourses:

- In every culture, there are certain discourses which carry more power than others: discourses of power.

In mainstream Australian culture, discourses of power would include legal discourses, medical discourses, educational discourses, various discourses associated with government at local, state and federal level, the economic rationalist discourses of business and capitalism; and the discourses of competitive individualism and creative expression. In popular culture, discourses of femininity, masculinity, fashion, modernity and consumerism impact powerfully on how we navigate our lives and how we understand ourselves.

In other cultural contexts the powerful discourses which have most influence in terms of shaping individual and collective thinking, acting and communicating can be very different; shaped by different histories, politics, belief systems; coming out of (and feeding into) social worlds organized and enacted very differently. Priorities might have less to do with individualism and personal achievement, for example, and more to do with collective identity, nationalism, respect for age and experience, conformity. To 'crack' discourses (both in terms of reading them and engaging in them) in different cultural codes is often very difficult; but approaching text from a discourse perspective can help to make the meaning-making (*the discursive construction*) more visible and accessible. The linguistic and discourse choices made – wordings, tenor, rhetorical strategies – are informing in terms of understanding how the culture which produced the text constructs and enacts the world.

Discourse mapping: we move in and out of discourses in our social, personal and professional worlds; adapting how we use language, how we behave, how we think about things. In Gee's terms, we navigate our way through the various secondary discourses we acquire from the moment we expand our social worlds beyond the safety zone of our primary discourse. The more discourses we acquire, and the more confident and competent we become in them, the more access and control we have in relation to our lives' choices and opportunities. Language has often been described as 'power'; and discourse competence can be thought of as cultural capital: the more discourses we can navigate and employ, the more we can do and achieve.

When first introducing students to the concept of discourse, I find the most effective way is to turn the lens on ourselves, as discourse participants. Discourse is best understood by doing it and noticing how it behaves.

I usually offer myself as a first example, listing a few of the discourses I 'inhabit' in my life: the family discourse, in particular the mother discourse; the dog-owner discourse; the discourse of music – and there are sub-discourses here, as I enjoy both classical music and contemporary rock music, which behave 'discursively' quite differently; and the academic

discourse, which is a good one to analyse more closely, as my students are also navigating this one.

This is how we might track the **academic discourse**:

Specialised language	Associated behaviour	Underlying values
<p>Lexical items:</p> <p>lectures tutorials assignments references bibliography examinations theory paradigm data plagiarism first-class honours graduation</p> <p>Grammatical features</p> <p>Formal, declarative style More frequent use of nominalizations</p> <p>Rhetorical questions Discussion and debate: stating hypotheses</p> <p>Elaborated language</p>	<p>Listening and note-taking</p> <p>Engaging in debate</p> <p>Undertaking research</p> <p>Consulting literature</p> <p>Drafting assignments</p> <p>Studying for exams</p>	<p>Respect for knowledge</p> <p>Belief that education is important</p> <p>Desire to achieve a 'good' position in life</p> <p>To be well-informed and able to evaluate information critically</p> <p>To advance knowledge</p>

Discourse Interaction 1 – Your turn

Choose a secondary discourse that is part of your social or professional life. It might be a political, sporting or religious discourse; and a conservative political discourse will be quite different from a Marxist political discourse; the discourse of rugby league will be quite different to that of cricket or greyhound racing. Each discourse will use characteristic – and identifying – kinds of language and behaviour, and will be framed by certain kinds of attitudes, views and values. Plot your chosen discourse onto the table below, giving examples of typical words, expressions, phrases; typical practices or behaviour; values you see as 'driving' the discourse.

LANGUAGE	BEHAVIOUR	VALUES

Discourse Interaction 2

Construct a 'discourse profile' of yourself: Choose 5 or 6 discourses which you see as significant components of your life. Education is an obvious one which you all have in common; and you will all have variations of family discourses – as parents, partners, siblings etc. You will also have specialised discourses which frame other areas of your life – to do with recreation, affiliations, community activities etc.

List them in order of acquisition in your life: then see if you can 'rank' them – in terms of the significance they have to you, the extent to which they shape your identity/sense of who you are. Think too, as you are ordering them, about which were easiest to acquire, which you feel most comfortable and competent in; which involved most work (the academic discourse is one which students often list as the hardest-won discourse in their lives.) This kind of discourse self-audit encourages the kind of reflective analysis which we aim for when working in the interface between languages and cultures.

Critical Discourse Analysis – some first strategies

Having familiarised you with the concept of discourse, it's now time to introduce you to critical discourse analysis – which sits at the heart of critical literacy. Critical Discourse Analysis approaches text as an object of interested enquiry, from which meaning beyond surface meaning can be discovered. It takes as a given that all texts come out of contexts, are cultural productions and representations, and are the way they are due to particular circumstances, relationships and configurations. It is an orientation to text which is essentially 'interrogative': it asks questions. The process of looking closely at how text is constructed – what lexical and grammatical choices have been made, what discourse(s) frame the text – allows for access to much deeper information about the meaning that is being made: information which is cultural rather than purely linguistic.

In order to carry out this kind of investigative process, we need some systematic tools: the following two strategies are simple but effective.

1. Lexical classification

This involves first identifying the main participant or topic of a text: euthanasia; sky-diving; floods in North Queensland; local politics; languages education; breast feeding; refugees. The next step is to pull out all the 'content' words in the text which relate to this main participant: the load-bearing words, **nouns, adjectives, adverbs** and **verbs**. These are the significant components of the text, the lexical items which determine the shape of the meaning. List these words – one below the other, so that you have a clear, easily scannable list when you've finished. What you've done here is to strip away any distracting or extraneous words, to reveal the 'essence' being represented; rather like removing the flesh off a fillet of fish to reveal the backbone: the core shape or essence.

INTERACTION

Consider the following two texts: each represents the same event, a public forum between developers of a proposed tourist resort and local environmentalists: same event, same participants, which produced two quite different texts for two different local papers:

TEXT A

Concerned environmentalists rallied at Hook Point yesterday, to express their strong opposition to the proposed multi-million dollar resort development. They came well-prepared and well organised, armed with scientific evidence about the likely degradation of the surrounding reef and coastal environment. They are fighting for one of the most beautiful remaining strips of coastal Queensland; which they describe as unique, fragile, unspoilt and rare; in danger of being irretrievably lost if the development proceeds. Spokesman for the group spoke of the disastrous consequences, ecologically, environmentally and socially, describing the proposed development as a radical disruption, economically driven, a blatant erosion of community interests. Members of the group declared themselves as 'totally committed' to protecting the area, defending the right of the community to preserve its unique identity. "We will fight this as long as we have any remaining resources and energy. It is our responsibility to preserve the natural beauty of this unique environment, to stand up to this blatant act of destruction by greedy, environmentally-negligent commercial interests."

TEXT B

Criticism of the proposed development was vigorously responded to by a spokesman for developers AZJAN, who accused protestors of narrow-mindedness and self-interest, describing local environmentalists as operating with tunnel-vision, denying local residents the enormous opportunities of improved job prospects and prosperity which would flow from the project. "These greenies are nothing but self-preoccupied ratbags, trapped in negative mode, playing their own politics at the expense of the larger community". He cited high local unemployment figures, arguing that the development would improve economic activity and regenerate the small local business community. He insisted that the development would be carried out carefully and sensitively, with appropriate consultation, to safeguard the well-being of the community and the environment. "This is an extraordinary place: beautiful, spectacular, with great natural splendour. This rich resource should be enjoyed by people from all over the world".

Your task is to carry out a lexical classification of the two main participants in each text: the **environmentalists** and the **developers**. List the content words associated with each in both texts: verbs, adverbs, adjectives, nouns.

TEXT A

Environmentalists	Developers/development

TEXT B

Environmentalists	Developers/development

Scan your completed lists, and – based on what you see in each list - define each participant as constructed in that text: summarise 'who they are'.

This is an easy exercise. Two totally different representations emerge clearly from the lists; two diametrically opposed lexical constructions of the same protagonists.

In **Text A**, the **environmentalists** are presented as strong, energetic, organised, responsible, prepared to fight tirelessly to preserve what they value (notice the nature particularly of the verbs used – verbs are 'load-bearing' lexical items). In **Text B**, they are selfish, self-preoccupied, negative ratbags, trapped in their vision, 'playing' politics.

In **Text A**, the **developers** are destructive, negligent, greedy, engaged in negative activities such as *eroding*, *destroying*, *disrupting*; while the **Text B** version of them depicts them as community-minded, committed to bringing prosperity and employment to the local community, consulting, caring, generously sharing the rich resources of the region with people from around the world.

Same context, same participants, two totally opposing versions of events; both newspaper texts, but coming out of different discourses: an environmentalist/conservation discourse and a development discourse. Each discourse not only 'names' the world differently, it also 'frames' it differently in terms of values, ideologies and interests.

You may have noticed that a third participant in each text – the environment itself – is also lexically constructed in quite different ways: on the one hand it is depicted as fragile, at risk, in need of protection; on the other, rich, beautiful, a great resource that the whole world will enjoy – no sense of fragility.

This simple exercise in lexical classification will have shown you how easily close inspection of text yields cultural information. The making of meaning involves values, politics, investments, assumptions; the social responses and orientations which we have explored in this project when examining the nature of 'culture'. Texts are products of discourses.

2. Grammatical analysis

The second strategy for 'interrogating' text is grammatical analysis: noticing and interpreting grammatical choices which have been made in the making of the text, and understanding the influence these choices have on the subsequent making of meaning.

We look, for example, at:

- Choice of verb moods
- Use of pronouns and possessive adjectives

We have established that texts are determined by contexts of culture and contexts of situation; and that these contexts involve relationships and interactions. Looking at the grammatical dimension of texts provides information about these relationships. Lexical classification shows us what 'version' of something is being constructed and presented, grammatical analysis identifies the relationship – or *tenor* - being constructed; how the text is positioning us as readers/receivers; is it creating a sense of shared understanding? or authority? or complicity? How does it do this?

Verb moods

Verb moods are key indicators of tenor: the three moods – **declarative, interrogative** and **imperative** – play a significant role in the shaping of the relationship being constructed between the producer of the text and the targeted consumer.

- **Declarative mood**

The declarative verb mood suggests ‘fact’, authority. A text written completely in declarative mood is not creating a sense of dialogue, but is telling ‘how things are’. Information leaflets, textbook texts, sports commentaries, publishers’ fliers: the tenor is one of transmission of information. (“*This volume inserts the place of the local in theorizing about language policies and practices in applied linguistics. Engaging with the dominant paradigms in the discipline of applied linguistics, the chapters include research relating to second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, literacy and language planning*”.) The declarative mood is helpful in creating a sense of objectivity, distance, ‘fact’.

- **Interrogative mood**

The inclusion of verbs in interrogative mood shifts the tenor of a text. The relationship being crafted becomes more dialogic, more interactional, more personal.

Texts such as advertisements, political speeches and religious sermons often use the interrogative mood to good effect. “*Are you looking for a new direction to your life?*” “*Are you tired of waking up exhausted every morning?*” “*Do you want the best for your children?*” “*Do we believe our standard of living is worth fighting for?*” Advertisements in particular rely heavily on the creation of a contrived sense of relationship: intended to suggest they ‘care’ for the consumer, and can solve their various problems, improve the quality of their lives.

- **Imperative mood**

The imperative mood often works alongside the interrogative mood in texts designed to create a feeling of involvement and relationship: “*Running out of ideas for Fathers Day? Visit our website – save your energy – find the ideal gift for that hard-to-please partner!*” “*Worried about choosing the right school? Visit us on Open Day, and see why we offer the best all-round education for both your sons and daughters.*” The imperative mood suggests help, direction, good counsel; it is designed to persuade the reader/listener/viewer that the text knows best; and to suggest dialogue and involvement.

Pronouns and possessive adjectives

These are also good indicators of the kind of tenor a text is working to establish. The frequent use of words such as ‘we’, ‘our’, ‘your’, ‘us’ build up assumed identifications, shared values and connections. “*Do we want our children’s employment opportunities to be eroded?*” “*We have always been prepared to fight for what we believe in*”. “*Want to join us in the most exciting new development this decade?*”

In some texts, the ideology driving the text is carried very significantly by the pronouns and possessive adjectives. Political speeches of all persuasions rely heavily on these grammatical markers to construct assumed shared priorities and values. Grammatical analysis, like lexical classification, doesn’t stop at noticing and describing what the text is ‘doing’ grammatically; this is the first step. The second step is the ‘so what?’ step: looking

more closely, armed with the questions which frame critical literacy, such as *how* and *why* the use of particular pronouns and possessive adjectives creates relationships of inclusion and exclusion. The kinds of questions asked might include:

- Who wrote this text?
- What is its intention?
- What discourse(s) drive it?
- What value system(s) underpin this discourse?
- How is it positioning me as reader/recipient?
- How could this topic have been presented differently?
- Who is included in the presumed audience of the text?
- Who is excluded?
- How do I respond to this text? Do I accept the offered 'reader position' or resist it?

It is this step from decoding and making meaning to critical engagement which characterizes critical literacy; and which equally characterizes the approach to intercultural languages pedagogy. Many other grammatical questions can be asked. For example, does this text use modality to shade meaning? If so, to what effect? What are the semantic but also the material effects, for example, when a political candidate states, "*If you elect me I will reduce taxes*" compared to a modally-qualified, "*If you elect me I could reduce taxes*"? Or what are the effects of including tag questions or qualifying clauses when making statements, often read as 'feminine' communicative practice? A critical approach pushes on with the 'so what?' questions, to ask what lies behind the 'behaviour' discovered in the text. Where does it come from, in terms of social assumptions, practices and processes? What does it tell us about the cultural shaping of the communicative act? What discourses are in action here?

Final example

This discussion of critical text analysis has necessarily drawn from texts in our shared language of English. In the final component of this module, you will explore how this approach can be used in the context of your own target language. Before moving to this all-important stage, consider the following example of using Critical Literacy in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context – which is a mirror situation to that of you and your students.

A pre-service EFL teacher from Hong Kong working with me carried out a careful analysis of the construction of two seemingly parallel texts: John Howard's New Year speech to the nation and the address on the same occasion by Hong Kong's Chief Executive at that time, Tung Chee Hwa. She chose these texts hoping that they would add to her understanding of some core differences (or similarities) between the two cultures she was inhabiting: her home context of Hong Kong and Australia. While both texts contain good wishes for their citizens, the framing of these wishes, and the implicit construction of the worlds framing the wishes, show quite different orientations and priorities; different versions of the world, of leadership and of the ideal citizens being addressed.

Howard's text draws from discourses of family values (underscored by assumed shared Christian values), of homeland security and economic prosperity. His citizens are constructed as sharing 'decent' values, being anxious and hard-working, wanting a safe and comfortable life, concerned about the well-being of their children and the safeguarding of traditional values. Howard constructs himself textually as strong, protective, confident in his ability to safeguard his people from economic ills or more sinister external dangers. The overall tenor is designed to create a sense of protective, paternal leadership, domestic focussed in terms of national priorities and individualistic in terms of the imagined families he is addressing.

Tsang's text creates a quite different tenor; harder-edged, less paternal. The Hong Kong citizen constructed in this text is characterised by aspiration, commitment, hard collective effort. A strong sense of the need to 'seize the moment' comes through the rhetoric of the text: of Hong Kong balanced at a critical moment in terms of political reconfiguration, economic prosperity, competitive enterprise in the global marketplace. Where Howard's text seems designed to reassure and allay misgivings, Tsang's text works to ignite a strong sense of aspiration and commitment: a desire to work harder, more skilfully, to get the edge in increasingly competitive times; to do more and to do better. Australians seem to be being lulled into accepting that they're in good hands and can relax; while the citizens of Hong Kong are being exhorted to aspire and improve, to contribute to greater national, collective success in a fiercely competitive, fast-moving economic and intellectual world. The sense of leadership in this text is qualitatively different: more challenging and demanding, suggesting a more formal, hierarchical and managerial relationship with the people; unlike Howard's text, which is informal and familiar in tenor, suggesting 'closer', more personal relationship.

This reading of the two texts was arrived at by using the two strategies discussed above: looking systematically at the lexical and grammatical choices made in each case, at the verbs associated with each leader (Howard 'cared' about family welfare and 'reassured' Australians that the government was in control of anti-terror strategies; Tsang 'expected' his citizens to work harder and 'warned' them of the danger of losing the edge in the competitive stakes of regional expansion); the choice of verb moods, and the use of personal pronouns and adjectives (or absence of), which create a particular tenor: so Howard uses imperatives ('Don't worry about...', 'Be confident that...') whereas Tsang's text is almost completely in declarative verb mood, suggesting authority and distance. The Howard text draws heavily on the assumption of shared values and solidarity: repeated use of 'we', 'our', 'your', 'us' drawing a circle of connectedness via personal pronouns and possessive adjectives. Tsang's text is far more impersonal and declarative, referring to Hong Kong by name rather than as 'our country', and to the citizens as 'the people of Hong Kong' rather than the more intimate and direct 'you'.

The final stage in the analysis, involves thinking about what these differences tell us about broader cultural and political environments and systems; about the respective 'meaning-making' systems of each cultural context. Discovering these differences inside the texts themselves – rather than being told about them as disembodied information – provides the experiential dimension of learning; which engages the learner at a deeper, analytical level, and is more likely to spin off into critical reflection of the self as well as of the 'other'.

COMPONENT 4: Languages, Cultures and Texts: The Making of Particular Meanings

To reconnect with our core objective in intercultural languages education: we hope to draw out of the experience of learning a new language the interconnected experience of operating in a new system of meaning-making; of 'inhabiting' the world inside a different frame, of reading it through a different lens; these frames and lenses being both linguistically and discursively shaped. I have argued that a critical literacy orientation to working with text helps develop the ability to notice, describe and critically reflect. It is now time to apply what we have been discussing to your specific target language; to see if a critical literacy approach to text can help to pull closer focus on the language-culture connection in your language. This final component of the module is where you can experiment, reflect and contribute to the project.

As proficient speakers of your target language – for some of you as native speakers – you have a storehouse of experience and intuitive knowledge of how culture shapes language and vice versa. You will be able to give many examples of this: to talk about the range of honorific forms in Japanese or Korean, for example; about the choice of alternative pronominal forms of address in French, Italian or Greek, which provide choices between intimate and informal relationship and respectful and formal; about linguistic forms which have to be gender-appropriate in some languages. Our aim now is to bring this intuitive, general knowledge into more systematic shape; to develop an integrated perspective and orientation which consciously attends to both language and culture in *all* second language interactions. Rather than interspersing occasional commentary, triggered by a particular text, we aim now to approach all text and communicative experience in the target language from a cultural as well as a linguistic perspective; to make the experience itself *culturally* experienced. Instead of just saying, "This is how it is: in French you use *tu* for... and '*vous* for...'", we continue to the 'so what?' question: Why might this be? How might this be useful? Or difficult? How do we manage in English without this? Would it solve some problems?

This dual focus can be fostered from the very first stages of language learning. Thinking 'discourse' is helpful from the start. Explicit grammatical or lexical analysis is clearly beyond the capabilities of early primary learners venturing into Italian or Indonesian: it will be some years before they can craft the kind of metalanguage or conceptual tools elaborated in this module; but the language-culture connection can be explored right from the earliest stages of language learning.

There is culturally-informing evidence already in first forms of address and greetings, in the words used, the behaviour enacted, the assumptions and beliefs framing the behaviour. Are you shaking hands, waving vaguely and saying 'Hi!', bowing, kissing? There is culture to be found in systems of counting, the naming of rooms in the house, in the coding of family relationships, in the ways in which children are arranged in classrooms, in the nature of activities presented in samples of language and visual representations, at school, at home, in social spaces in the target culture. These earliest experiences of naming and framing already provide data for analysis, at whatever level is appropriate. This kind of noticing, comparing and reflecting doesn't have to be articulated in advanced metalanguage. Some of the most convincing examples of critical reading of texts in first language classrooms come from lower primary contexts (e.g. Comber's study of Grade 2 children's critical reading of Mothers' Day fliers). It's a process of developing the interrogative approach to text and language experience:

Why do some languages have only one word for *brother* and one word for *sister*, while others differentiate lexically between older and younger siblings?

Why does the Inuit language have so many different words for *snow* and Mandarin different words for *rice*?

Why do we say *Salut! Ça va?* to some people and *Bonjour, Madame, comment allez-vous?* to others?

Who gets to do what in the illustrations of texts for early readers?

What everyday occurrences are enacted in children's songs, rhymes and games?

Whose voice is most persuasive or dominant in excerpts from media texts used by more senior students?

What assumptions underpin advertisements, song lyrics, political statements?

What social worlds are projected through these new lenses?

Focusing exercise

In the space provided below, provide examples of the following:

- **Lexical items** in your target language which have particular cultural significance (remember *mate* in Australian English)
- **Grammatical constructions** which are characteristic of the TL, different to English equivalents, which carry cultural information (e.g. age or gender variations)

LEXICAL ITEMS	GRAMMATICAL CONSTRUCTIONS
Commentary	Commentary

Your commentary will hopefully have included **analysis** as well as **description**. This is what happens: why might this be so?

For example, if you are working with Japanese, Korean or Vietnamese, you will be able to provide examples of how honorifics provide the linguistic means of indexing social relations. The choice of words and forms depends on relative status, office, generation, sex and gender, formality and a whole intersection of variables and relationships.

At one end of the continuum of complexity, the Thai language has at least eight terms for self-reference, which a speaker selects according to sex, status level and level of formality of the situation; while the Vietnamese language varies the terms of self-reference in terms of family relationships – different versions to reflect different family relations, but also, by extension, different wider social relations. So it is impossible to say *I* or *you* in Vietnamese without at the same time saying that *I relate to you* as a younger sibling to an older brother, as a mother to a child, as a son-in-law to a mother-in-law, or in any other way regarded as socially appropriate (Coulmas, 2005). Many Asian languages operate with this degree of complexity and variability, managing cultural and social relations via linguistic forms. On a less complex level, some European languages require social adjustment in terms of forms of address: as in the French variable of *tu* and *vous* investigated by one of the participating teachers in Phase 1 of the ILTLP Project.

Different languages have different ways of allowing speakers to make social adjustments. Expressions of modesty, or authority, of sympathy or solidarity, of respect or humility: each language has a repertoire of possibility, with many forms reflecting historical influences long since disappeared but still traced in the language. The shifts in these repertoires provide interesting evidence of the cultural intersections and influences associated with globalisation and transcultural experience. The moves being made towards language reform in many European languages in respect to equal opportunity, inclusion and gender equity are an example of this; as is the infusion of so many English words and expressions into the Japanese, French and German languages.

Some words have special significance in different languages; invested with meaning that is 'larger' than the literal meaning. Some words are even untranslatable into other languages – representing a very specific meaning which has evolved out of particular cultural circumstances: examples of this would be words such as *amae* and *wa* in Japanese; and *bush* in Australian English.

Synthesizing tasks

1. Create your own text in your target language

Your task now is to create a short, simple community text: e.g. an advertisement, a flier, a note home from school, a postcard or email message. Make it as 'French', 'Japanese', 'Italian' or 'Indonesian' as you can: i.e. someone else reading it will recognize it as such: not just from the language itself, but also from the tone and tenor of the text. Focus on choosing words which you see as core or typical lexical items; and focus on shaping the tenor in a culturally appropriate way. If your target language is characterised by directness and formality, then shape it that way; if it is more typically indirect and elaborated, craft your syntax accordingly. Your task is not only to transmit a message or pass on information, but also to create a sense of culture: a taste, atmosphere, enactment. If I were composing a postcard in French, it might begin with "*Bons baisers de....*" and end with "*Je t'embrasse...*" (Literal translation: *Good kisses from,* and *I kiss you*): this is quite normal between friends, family members, even acquaintances. A postcard in Japanese or in Mandarin – or from a typical young male Australian - would be quite different.

Your Text

2. Select and analyse an authentic text in your target language

Now choose a short text in your language, either from a text you use with your students (textbook, other resources) or from alternative sources (magazines, internet, excerpt from TV or video). Using the strategies we have explored earlier in the module – lexical classification, grammatical analysis, discourse recognition – conduct a critical analysis of the text.

Remember to work through both stages: **description** and **analysis**: table your evidence!

Lexical choices	Grammatical features	Discourse - values

Reflection:

- Was this an easy exercise to work through?
- Did it yield anything unexpected or new?
- Can you see ways of adapting this kind of approach to text to the level of your learners?

At this point, it will be useful to revisit the check list on p. 14 to remind yourself of the understandings which underpin this kind of critical analysis, and of how they connect with the orientation of the intercultural language learning approach. It should make more meaning, now you have worked through some practical examples yourself.

SUMMARY

Freire (1968) argued that we in effect 'create' culture and society by becoming critically conscious; and this is the argument that has always framed the Critical Literacy approach to working with text. In our objective of developing intercultural literacy, we are more concerned with mediating intercultural experience, 'creating culture' in a more interactive, open and unfinished sense; which is possibly what Freire also meant. By refining strategies for discovering culture in text, and in experiencing our own movement between systems of meaning making, we have more agency; more access to alternative ways.

The exercises in discourse analysis in this module have given you practical experience of the concept that 'language and culture are co-constitutive': by analysing the behaviour of the language used in the text, looking closely and carefully at the choices made in its construction, you saw how this naming (lexical choices) and framing (grammar, discourse) of experience and of the 'world' presented determine the meaning that is accorded to it.

If we talk, for example, about 'sovereignty' and 'national pride', we are constructing a different world than if we talk about 'borderless communities' and 'global citizenship'. If we talk about 'freedom fighters' in a particular context, we are constructing a different version of a group of people than if we talk about 'terrorists'. Of course none of these instances of constructing-reality-through-discourse imply absolute values. We all swing between discourses and frames, as we find ourselves in different situations, relationships and cultural contexts. The ability to allow ourselves this capacity to swing is part of what we want for our language learners.

Notions of diversity, variability and hybridity are important. Working between/across languages and cultures as we do in language classrooms provides many instances of discourse adjustment, flexibility and hybridity. What we are hoping for our learners is to move away from the simulated approach to performing role plays ('imagine you're at the market, and want to barter for a pair of sandals'), imagined scenarios where they are pretending to be the 'other', outsiders looking in, to authentic communicative and textual experience which engages them in authentic ways; to developing discourse competence.

Final Reflective Exercise

- Think about your own relationship with the language you teach. Those of you who are native speakers teaching your first language, think about your relationship with English - your additional language.

- Identify **one** example of language/textual behaviour in this language which seems to you to be particularly 'defining' of the culture. It might be a single word or expression, or a grammatical structure.

For example, if you're thinking about Australian English, you might give as an example:

"She'll be right, mate!"

While the word 'mate' is also used in other English-speaking countries, this is a uniquely Australian expression. What does it tell you about the Australian way of 'doing life'? Think about the lexical choice of 'mate'; while used in other versions of English, this has particular significance in Australian English. Think why this might be: what contexts, relationships, circumstances and value systems may have come together to invest this word with the cultural significance it now has? You might think of life in the trenches in WW2; 'settling' the outback; the Australian ethos of a classless and egalitarian society (in theory if not always in terms of enactment); Bob Hawke's famous use of 'mate' in discussion with a Head of State from an Asian nation – which caused considerable consternation in that context, but seemed in character and 'right' to many Australians.

List your example below:

What is particularly culturally informing about your example?

P.S.

Re-read the paragraph above where I discuss the word *mate*: identify two choices made in the construction of this 'text' which provide you with information about *my* reading of the world/shaping of values...

REFLECTION

After working through this Module, you're in a position to think about how you can draw upon a Critical Literacy approach in your work with your own students. There are clearly limitations and constraints, depending on the language you are teaching and the age level of your students. Some languages 'make meaning' in ways which are more immediately recognizable as culturally 'interesting' (different) than others; these languages are easier to interrogate. I would argue, however, that all language, all text, yields cultural information if we know how to look and if we have a more substantive understanding of what culture is. Critical Literacy, like intercultural languages education, is an orientation, which can be explored in more developed ways with more advanced learners but which can equally frame early languages experience.

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