



QATESOL PD  
Milpera High School  
May 9, 2015



Critical Literacy with EAL/D Learners  
– from theory to policy to practice.

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# Overview of session

- Why CL?
- What is CL?
- Janks' (2010) Critical Literacy synthesis model.
- CL in high school English teaching policy? - changes over time.
- The teachers and students in my study.
- How did the teachers teach critical literacy? - using Janks' model as a lens.
- What's in, what's out and why?
- Where to from here?

But first, what do you see in this ad?

Our  
tough  
new work  
boot  
doesn't  
mind  
putting in  
a little  
overtime.

There's no tougher work boots than our new Mallee, and you'll feel comfortable in them after hours too. That's because the upper is crafted from a single piece of heavy chromed tanned hide, for a better fit, then oil impregnated making them water resistant. At ground level, the combination of its dual density, air cushioned, nitrile rubber sole and an EVA comfort insole gives them lightness and flexibility. Yet their most appealing characteristic is their rugged new looks, which means you'll feel equally at home in the front paddock as you would in the front bar.

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Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Canberra, Toowoomba, London, Kent, New York, Auckland, Christchurch.

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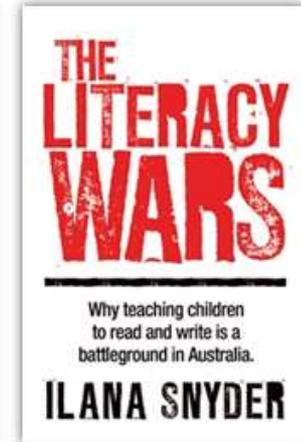
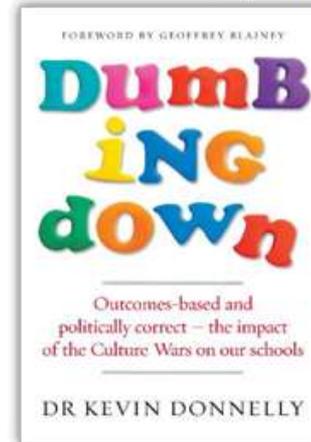
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# Why a focus on Critical Literacy?

Today's world is text-saturated. Texts are always trying to 'work' us in particular ways, e.g., buy something, believe something. We need to understand the 'work' that texts are doing and the way they 'work'/ work on us. Then we can make informed decisions and "talk back" to those texts.

*Context: The public debate – policy and practice.....*



- “What kinds of literate practices, for whom, fitted for what social and economic formations can and should be constructed and sanctioned through teaching?” (Freebody & Luke, 1990, p. 2);
- “Migrant working class kids are getting basic skills and not the intellectual rigour that others get” (Luke, 2013);
- “Creating students for functional human capital is our new dystopia” (Luke, 2013).

# Six reasons why critical literacy is empowering for EAL/D learners

It:

- allows students to understand if they are being manipulated;
- allows them to see why somebody is saying something in a particular way;
- helps students to understand the issue more deeply (thinking about the agents);
- that whole empowering business – helps students to understand how society works, how institutions work;
- helps them to understand their rights; to not accept everything at face value;
- helps their development as individuals and to know where they fit into society.

- Critical literacy is multi-faceted in nature. Distillation of the critical study of language to one neatly packaged “method” is actively resisted.

But what, in essence, is it?.....

- CL seeks to examine texts not in the sense of ‘criticising’, but in the sense of exploring what is going on in the writing (construction) of the text and what effects the construction has on the reader/viewer/hearer.

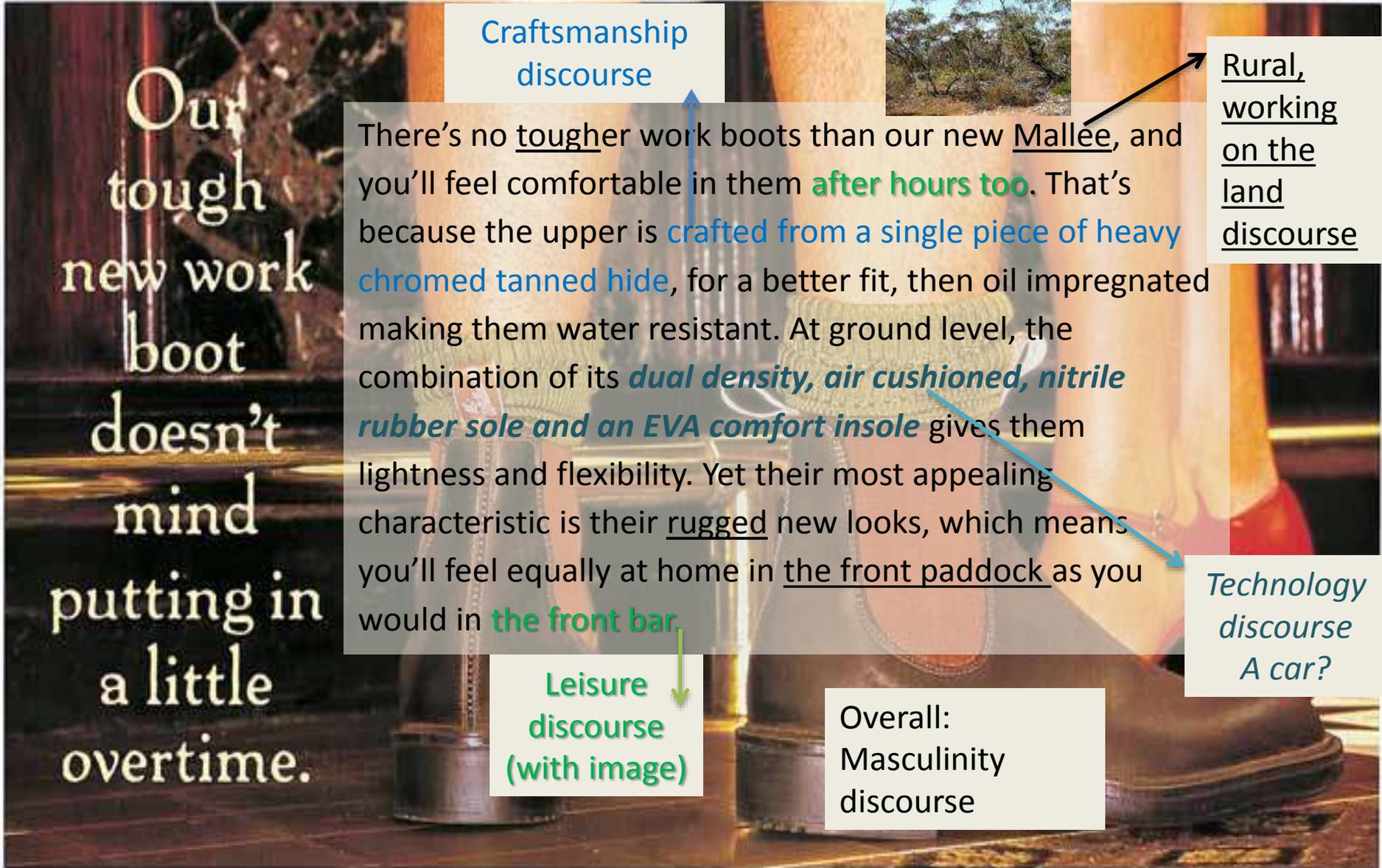
“By ‘critical’ we mean ways that give students tools for *weighing and critiquing, analysing and appraising* textual techniques and ideologies, values and positions.

The key challenge...is how to engage students with the study of ‘how texts work’ semiotically and linguistically, while at the same time taking up explicitly how texts and their associated social institutions work politically to construct and position writers and readers in relations of power and knowledge (or lack thereof)”.

(Luke, Comber & O’Brien, 1994, p. 35)

The ways texts are constructed – genre; specific language choices; images chosen; colour; angle; layout;

Values; attitudes and beliefs; Discourses e.g., nationalism; patriotism; masculinity etc



Our toughest new work boot doesn't mind putting in a little overtime.

Craftsmanship discourse

There's no tougher work boots than our new Mallee, and you'll feel comfortable in them **after hours too**. That's because the upper is **crafted from a single piece of heavy chromed tanned hide**, for a better fit, then oil impregnated making them water resistant. At ground level, the combination of its **dual density, air cushioned, nitrile rubber sole and an EVA comfort insole** gives them lightness and flexibility. Yet their most appealing characteristic is their rugged new looks, which means you'll feel equally at home in the front paddock as you would in **the front bar**.



Rural, working on the land discourse



Technology discourse  
A car?

Leisure discourse (with image)

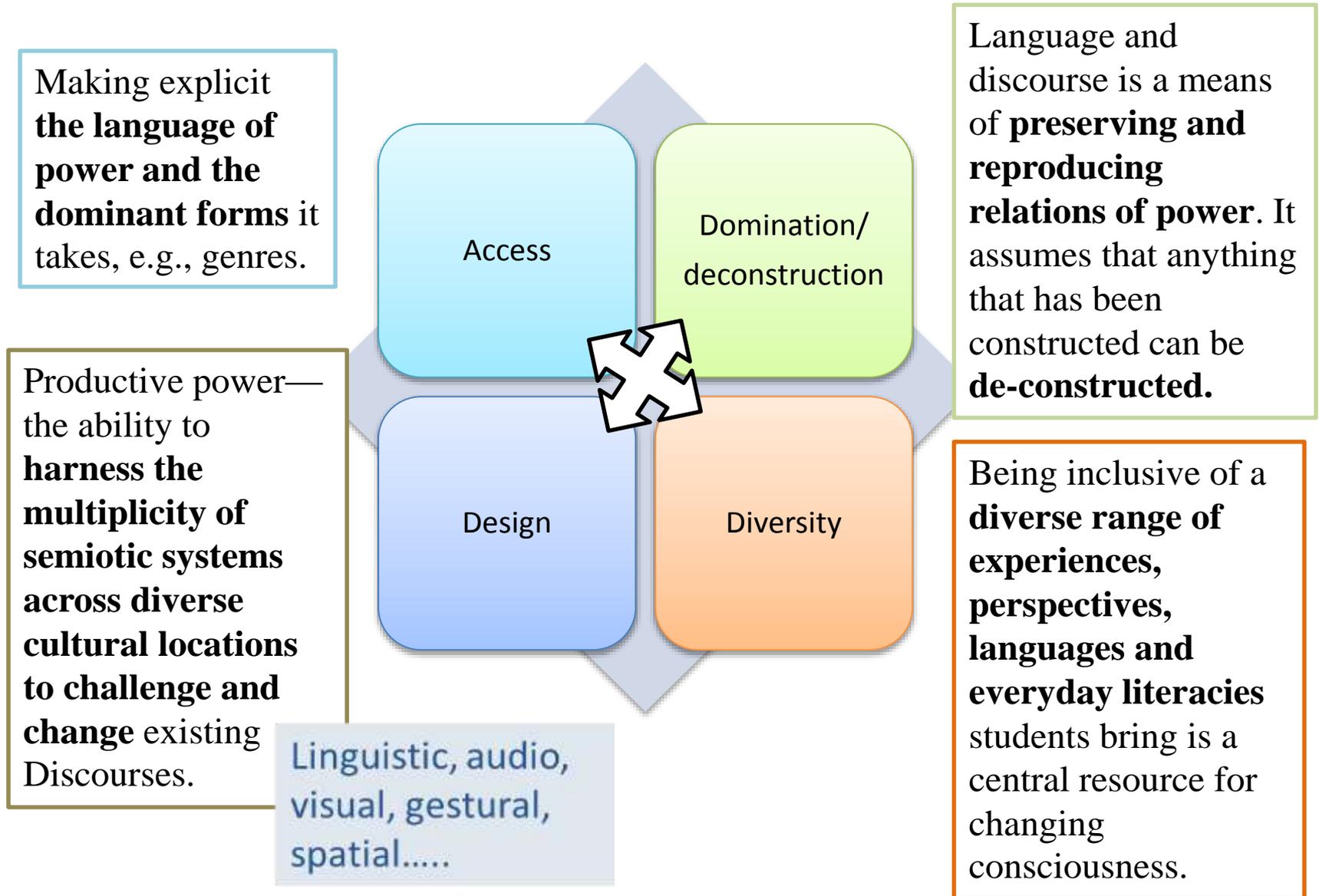
Overall: Masculinity discourse

There's no tougher work boots than our new Mallee, and you'll feel comfortable in them after hours too. That's because the upper is crafted from a single piece of heavy chromed tanned hide, for a better fit, then oil impregnated, making them water resistant. At ground level, the combination of its dual density, Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Canberra, Townsville, London, Kent, New York, Auckland, Christchurch.

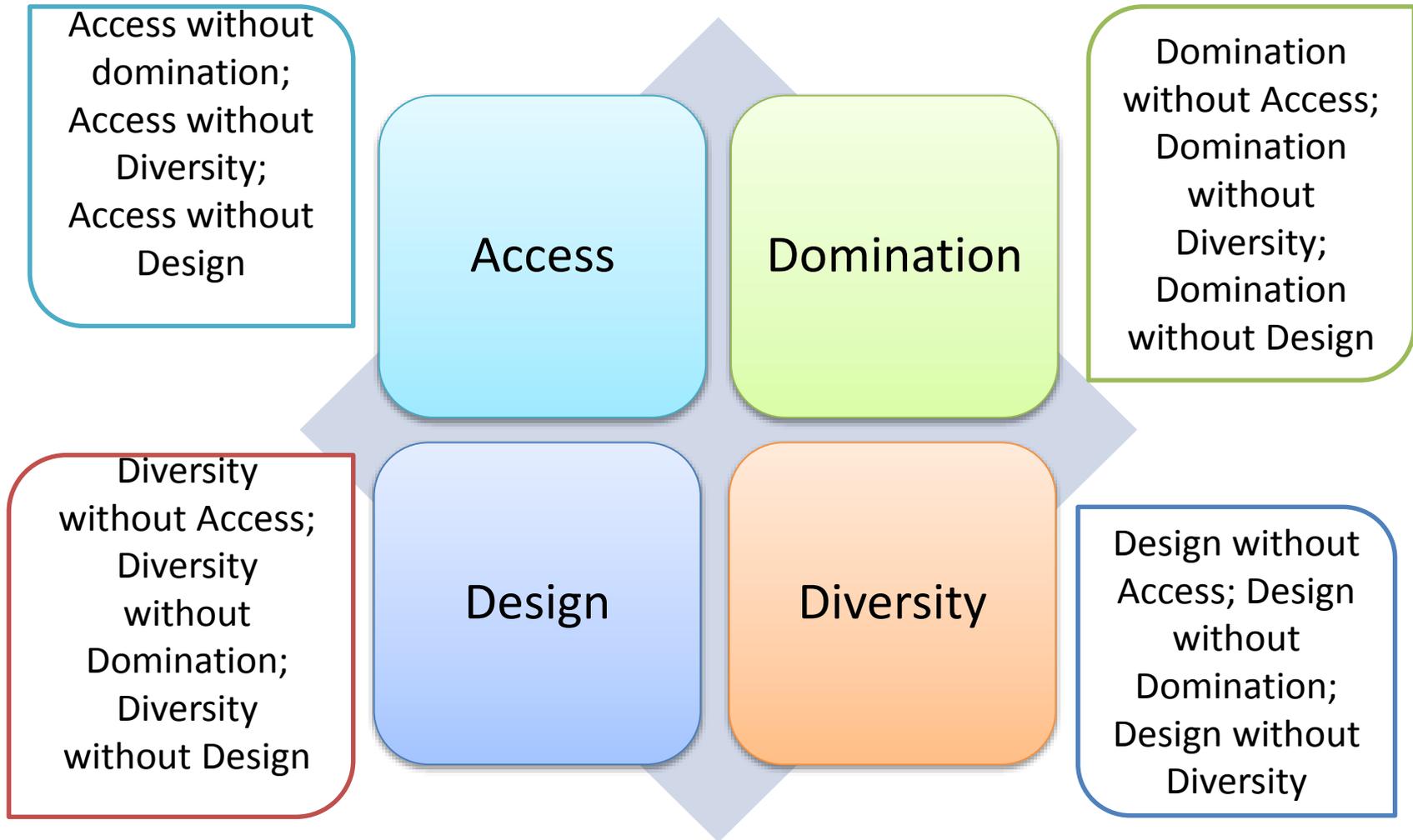
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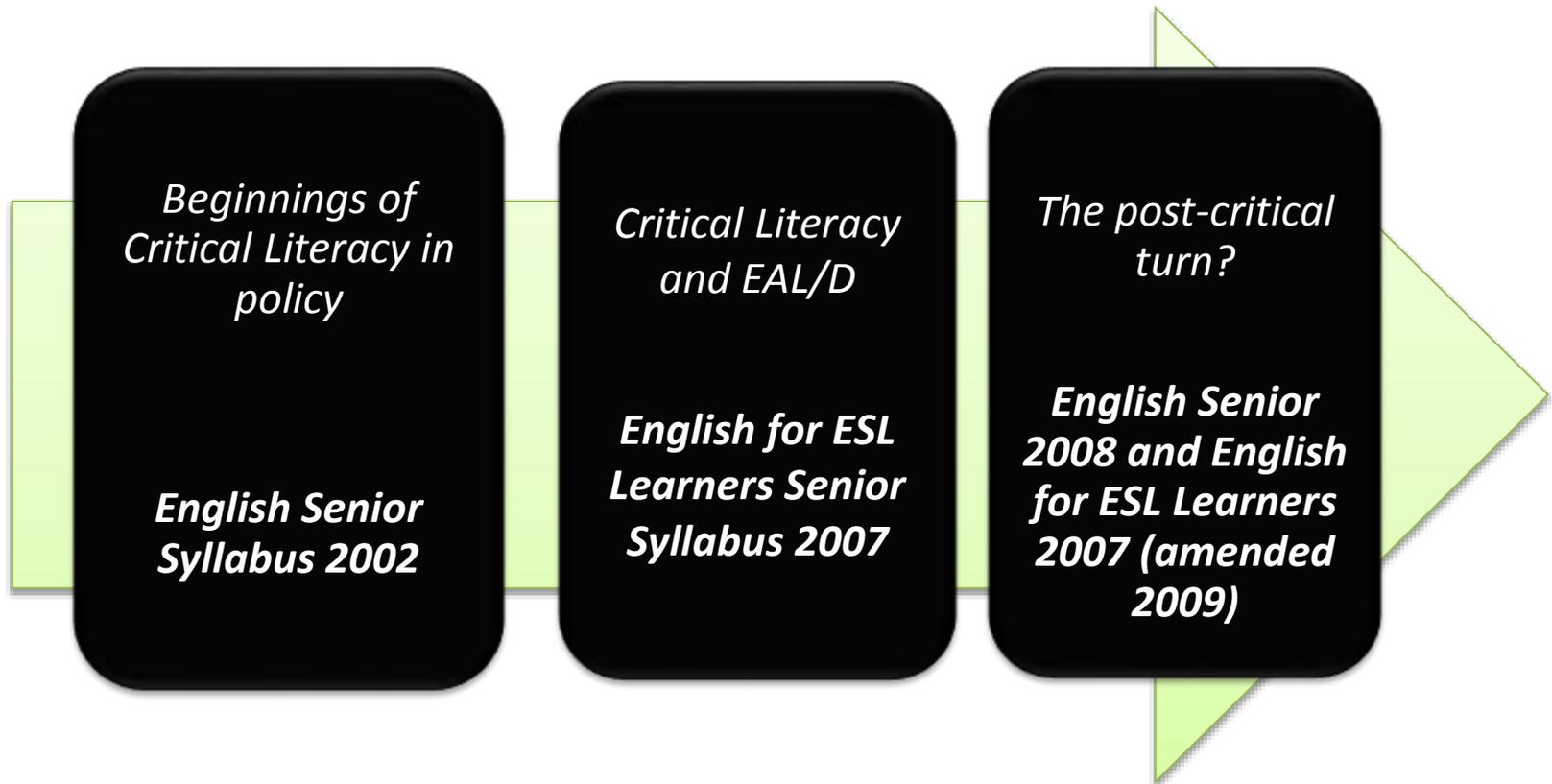
# Janks' Synthesis Model of Critical Literacy (2010).



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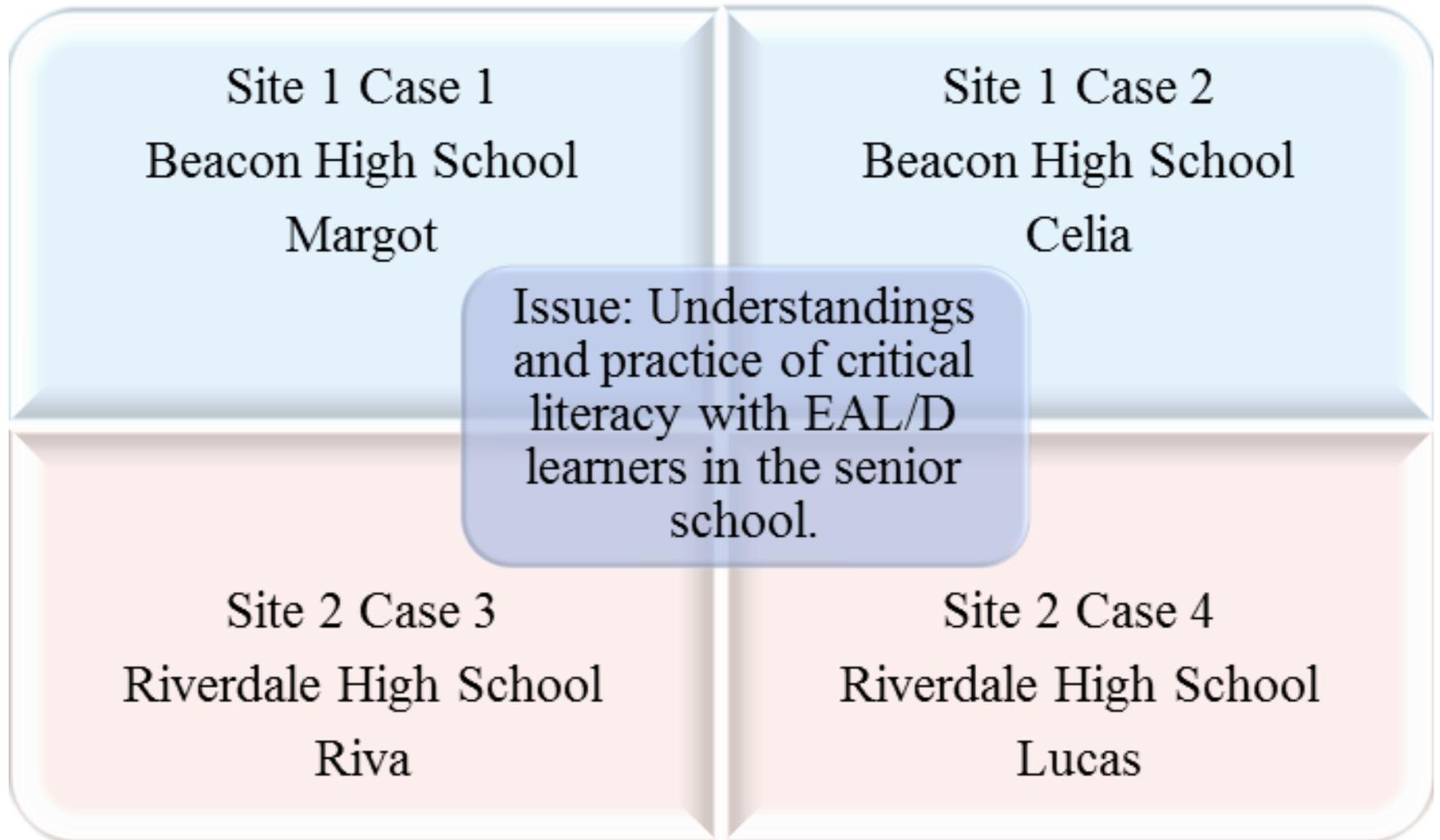


# Queensland Senior English syllabuses and critical literacy



CDA analysis	Senior English Syllabus 2002	English for ESL syllabus 2009
<p>What types of processes and participants (SFL) dominate?</p>	<p><b>Processes:</b></p> <p><b><u>i. Mental (16):</u></b>  develop knowledge; interpreting; taking account of;  know; make meaning; synthesise;  analyse; infer from; evaluate; substantiate;  explore; choose; consider; making choices about; producing; make decisions about.</p> <p><b><u>ii. Material (11):</u></b>  construct own texts; use texts ; control texts;  demonstrate knowledge; select;  establish; make use of; use; combining; apply;  producing texts</p> <p><b>Participants (24):</b>  texts; knowledge;  students; cultural context/ context; genres;  meanings; choices; positions; roles and relationship ; readers , listeners viewers  power; distance; affect identities; discourses;  subject matter; literacies as social practice;  cultural assumptions; beliefs, values and attitudes; writers;</p>	<p><b>Processes:</b></p> <p><b><u>i. Mental (6):</u></b>  select; analyse;  synthesise; infer;  evaluate;  drawing conclusions</p> <p><b><u>ii. Material (2):</u></b>  offer a position; justifying</p> <p><b>Participants (8):</b>  Students; texts; a variety of written and spoken texts;  meaning; work; a position;  conclusions; decisions</p>

Multiple, instrumental case study design (Simons, 2009).



	Beacon High		Riverdale High	
Year level and teacher	Year 11 Teacher 1 Margot	Year 12 Teacher 2 Celia	Year 11 Teacher 3 Riva	Year 11 Teacher 4 Lucas
Class size	28	17	23	18
Countries of origin	Afghanistan, Burundi, China, Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda	Afghanistan, China, Japan, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Vietnam	Brazil, China (mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan), Fiji, France, Germany, Korea, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Vietnam	China, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Russia, Vietnam
Proportion of international students to migrants/refugees (different visa classes and funding sources)	20/80	30/70	40/60	50/50
ESL Bandscales proficiency (McKay et al., 2007) levels across R, W, L and S	4-5	4-5	3 <sup>a</sup> -7	4-6
Range of achievement levels as reported by teachers	B- to C+ (Average C)	B to D (average C)	Not available	A- to D+
Pathways into senior schooling	Via junior school or direct entry as international student	Via junior school or direct entry as international student	Via HSP (EQI) or direct entry or LEC or other schools	Via HSP (EQI) or direct entry or LEC or other schools
Projected destinations (as reported by teachers)	Tertiary study, vocational study, work	Tertiary study, vocational study, work	Tertiary study	Tertiary study

Syllabus as Genre of Governance -  
English for ESL Learners 2007 amended  
2009

Examining how individuals and groups, times, places, events or concepts and their relationships with one another are represented in written or spoken and/or multimodal texts such as documentaries, feature articles, television and radio news broadcasts.

Classroom  
talk and resources

Examining how individuals and groups, times, places, events or concepts and their relationships with one another are represented in written or spoken and/or multimodal texts such as documentaries, feature articles, television and radio news broadcasts.

talk and resources

Teacher  
agency

# How did the teachers do it?

For Riva, critical literacy is not beyond her learners, some of whom are at Bandscales level 4 . It is the pedagogy that makes the difference. In her own words:

... I think it shows that the CRITICAL literacy is NOT too hard for these kids to understand. It's just the tools that you attach to it, to explain it, because they can clearly, between themselves, have different readings. It's not THE DOING ... it's the attaching of terms to those and explaining them as a concept in a kind of a package, and putting a name on it. I think THAT'S the hard thing. It's not THE DOING, it's not THE UNDERSTANDING. It's packaging a concept and naming it.... You'll often hear criticisms of using critical literacy that are really criticisms of the material that they're expected to manage, I think. NOT, not criticisms of their ability to understand.

(Riva, Interview 2, October 6, 2010; lines 474-495).

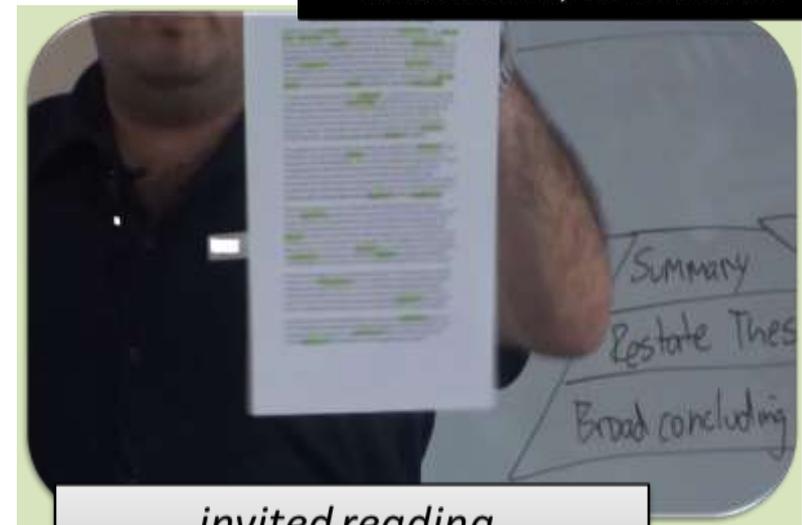
# Access - Making explicit the language of power and the dominant forms it takes, e.g., genres

Lucas: I understand that THEY understand the critical terminology and how they are being positioned, whether or not they can write it fluently is the big ask for any ESL student.

JA: So how do you address that problem?

Lucas: With regards to this documentary and the next couple, we give them a lot of terminology and we UNPACK some of the terminology that they are going to be hit with. We also give them, the first thing that we give them are cloze exercises that have those words missing but have the sentence starters and (we) show them (that) THIS IS HOW we want you to talk about the documentary. We might give them a few topic sentences and (then we) SEE what they come up with after that. We scaffold them with regards to the (1.0) requirements of an essay, their introductory sentence, their thesis, their preview and all that, EVERYTHING that has to do with the genre as well. Every time that we speak about this I would be using the terminology that I expect them to HAVE in the essay. We do give them a MODEL. I think the model is about the Disneyland one so they can actually see how the different critical aspects have been spoken about... like colour, music, camera angles.

(Lucas, Interview 2, October 5, 2010; lines 303-322)



*conveys, presents,  
illustrates, constructs*

*invited reading,  
marginalisation, positioning*



# Without Access, they'd be at sea....

JA: So what would happen if you didn't scaffold [their writing]?

Riva: They'd be at sea. They'd be at sea, and they'd be doing too much at once because they're developing a new way of looking at a text, critically; they're developing understandings of terms and concepts, and they're writing complex sentences, these are complex sentences they're writing, using nominalisations and passive voice, so they're doing too much at once and I don't want them to flounder. I want them to get through and believe they can do it. I want success so I scaffold that.

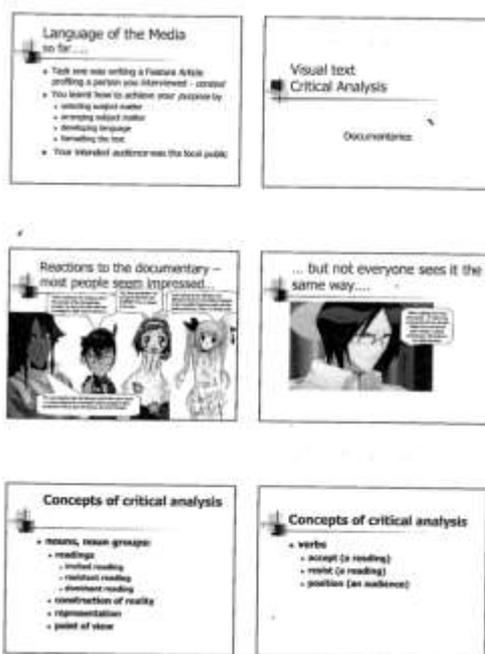
(Riva, Interview 2, October 6, 2010; lines 197-243)

# Domination/ deconstructing texts to investigate power relations between author and reader

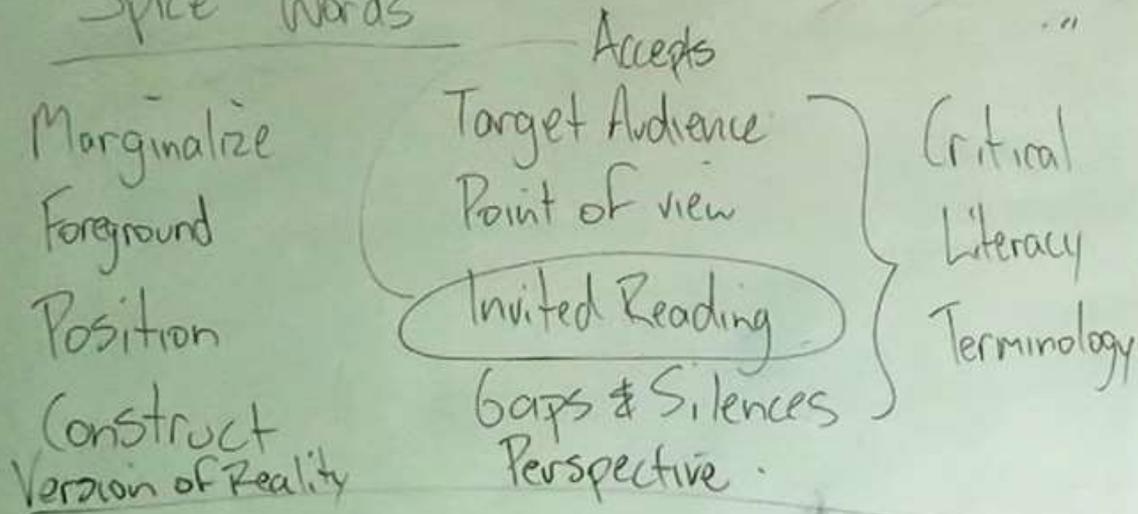
Riva: A **representation** works within a **construction of reality**. So it's like construction of reality is the big picture, and the **representation** can be of PEOPLE, of IDEAS, of things that happen, of GROUPS OF PEOPLE. So, when constructing his reality, or her reality, the documentary maker will be **representing** the scientists in a particular way and **representing** the pandas ...in a particular way. So they are **representing** people, ideas and the issue, the situation. This situation has been **represented** in a particular way, and it could have been **represented** MUCH more negatively, couldn't it? [Riva shows, again, the slide of Uryu Ishida challenging the dominant reading. See Figure 6.6 below.]

If you remember those opening scenes of the factories. If that had continued, we could have had a very different construction of reality, a very DIFFERENT **representation** of the scientists. So, these (representations) arise from the point of the view of the text creator, the MAKER of the text, the WRITER, FILMMAKER, the POET, the PLAYWRIGHT, WHOEVER makes the text, their point of view, their own personal context, just like yours when you wrote your feature article; their own personal context, their idea about the world, their beliefs, their values, what they think is important and true, affects how they **represent** people, ideas and things and affects the world that THEY develop and show you.

(Riva, Lesson 1, October 6, 2010; lines 200-220)



## Spice Words



What is the documentary trying to get you to believe

## Diversity – drawing on the range of experiences, perspectives, languages and everyday literacies ...

- Celia’s speech task

They are in control of their own topic, drawing on their own experience and of the design elements of a written speech task.

A hortatory speech task presents the opportunity, which Celia takes up, for students to generate responses that reflect their personal diversity rather than being given a particular position to adopt. For example, students in this class can draw on their own experiences, or the experiences of family members, of oppression (the unit topic) in order to write their “call to action” speech.

“You can be a person...historical or ...imaginary”; “You *can* choose an issue that’s very real historically or in modern context”.

Celia seems to be taking a particular “stance towards multiplicity” (Misson & Morgan, 2006, p. 235), giving students scope within which to express their ideas and positions. She provides them with room to develop these ideas and positions and to make their own decisions on which features to include in a persuasive speech.

## Diversity....

Margot: ... so we talked about media in other countries. We talked about Al Jazeera. That's what came up; how would Al Jazeera represent this, this or this? Would they represent it in the same way as The Courier Mail does? Why not? What is it about Al Jazeera that makes it represent this in a different way?

(Margot, Interview 2, March 10, 2010; lines 663-667)

Margot: Why are we looking at how the media represents people? How does it affect you?

Male student: Future generations.

Female student: Because we are African.

Margot: Yeah, you're Africans, but why does, how does it affect you not - not being represented in the media? No seriously, how does it affect you for example if you do not see yourself in the media?

Male student: You're unwanted.

Margot: Good. Thank you.

Female student: That's how - forget us.

Margot: You feel left out. So people who are not represented - that's an excellent, that's a fantastic point - you feel left out. You feel that you don't belong to the community. Are you reflected in the media? No you are not. So you feel left out. You become...

Male Student: Invisible.

Margot: ...invisible. We can't see you, exactly. Just getting back to left out - can you give me some other words we could use instead of left out?

Male Student: Marginalised.

Female student: Excluded.

Male Student: Looked past.

Margot: Marginalised. Excluded (writes these words on the whiteboard)

Female student: Omitted.....

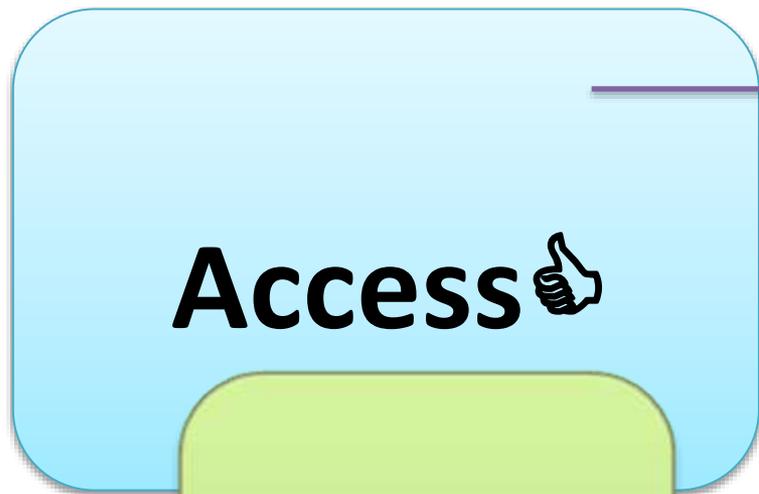
**Design** - harnessing the multiplicity of semiotic systems across diverse cultural locations to challenge and change existing Discourses

Linguistic, audio, visual, gestural, spatial....

- Students in Celia's Year 12 class were able to draw on their own ideas, experiences and positions to write their hortatory speech using written, linguistic design elements. However, they were not able to engage in transforming dominant texts using multiple sign systems as a resource.
- Why? Syllabus Learning Experiences and Assessment items don't ask for this; Time and resourcing; Teacher knowledge....

## Design? – talking back to texts and culture....

- Students in Yr 11 at both high schools were asked to write/”design?” analytical essays deconstructing the documentaries (= linguistic mode).
- Imagine if they’d been given the opportunity to design and create their own documentary using the elements of design they had deconstructed?
- “If I had the time and resources I would say that [doing creative design work] would be an excellent activity. But unfortunately, time and resources are against us, especially in the final term where things are moving at a breakneck speed” (Lucas, interview, November, 10, 2010).



**Access** 👍



Domination/  
deconstruction



Diversity



Design

Genre Pedagogy-  
Lots of PD over time.

Critical Literacy -2002 version

Insistence on SAE; Deficit model  
– what EAL/D kids bring to  
classrooms not valued.

Lack of PD and time; Emphasis  
on written work in Senior  
assessment tasks



Access

Domination/  
deconstruction

Design

Diversity

# Where to from here?

- What kind of critical literacy teaching and learning do you want to see in your teaching contexts?
- Which aspects of Janks' model are you already doing well? How? Why? (see also today's break-out sessions)
- Which aspects can be enhanced? How?

Thank you. 😊

# Some useful references:

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