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How do visual prompts shape students' written responses?

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigates the role that visual prompts play in stimulating students' ideas for writing narrative within the context of large–scale narrative writing assessments such as the National Assessment for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). It examines four primary school students' responses to visual prompts used in past writing assessments in state and national jurisdictions over the last decade. Existing literature relating to the role of visual in communicating meaning is extensive (Callow 2013; Jewitt 2013; Kress 2010; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; O'Halloran & Vin 2014). However, there is limited literature specifically related to the influence of using visual stimuli on student outcomes in large–scale writing assessments. This thesis contributes to filling this gap. It argues that the visual component of writing assessment prompts plays an influential role, impacting the quality and type of story that students generate, and in turn assessment outcomes.

Data were gathered via interviews, document analysis, classroom observations and an intervention phase. Social Semiotic Theory informed my analysis, which included the development of a *conceptual matrix* and *analytical framework* for evaluating the assessment prompts. Findings indicate significant historical changes in the compositional design and meanings offered, setting new conditions for reading this visual resource. These changes impacted the participating students' preferences and responses.

An *educational scaffold* was also developed for use with the students during an intervention stage of the study. Strategic use of the *educational scaffold* revealed that a supportive metalanguage fosters higher engagement with visual narrative prompts than initial responses without a metalanguage support. Students were also better able to identify, reframe and critique possible meanings in visual prompts more independently and deeply when supported by a schema. The *educational scaffold* also allowed students to move from interpreting only the familiar and everyday to the unaccustomed and abstract.

On the basis of the study I argue that use of the *analytic framework* could assist teachers' knowledge about the way pictures can mean. In addition, use of the *educational scaffold* could have positive consequences for pedagogical practice; inform students' interpretation of narrative pictures and thereby improve their capacity to translate visual meaning potentials in writing assessments and everyday contexts.

Acknowledgements

Doing this research, as it should be, was stimulating and thought-provoking, *hard* work. First I wish to thank my supervisors Dr Pauline Jones and Professor Jan Wright for their ongoing support, expertise and for making me 'think big and be brave' as I traversed this PhD journey - their invaluable commentary and expert guidance persisted until the muddy waters cleared. Thank you.

I wish to thank the University of Wollongong for the opportunity to undertake this research. Also for their scholarship support, which allowed me to take time from fulltime work to focus on my writing during the final stages of my study. I also thank the NSW Department of Education and Communities for approving this study.

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I also wish to thank the four most delightful students who I had the privilege of sharing time with. As a teacher of many years, I was captivated by their love of stories and our conversations about aspects of narrative that fascinated them. Thank you also to their dedicated teacher who, in a very busy school, opened her classroom door and shared her time, her teaching and her students with me.

Most importantly, thank you to my family. They have in a sense also undertaken this journey with me over these past six years. Their moral support, understanding and encouragement sustained me throughout. Thank you especially to Brett and Aden who have always supported me in my educational endeavours but particularly in this one for believing in my dream and my ability to undertake this study. And, a special place in my heart for my mum, who would have been thrilled to see me finish –

As it is with life, the doctoral journey is not as it first seems, nor the journey just as we expect but what a delight the travel and the exultation when we reach the stone marker.

Ceci n'est pas une pipe
Rene' Magritte

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Chapter one

Background and context for the study

Student assessment is an international preoccupation. This attention can partly be attributed to the use of standards–based testing as a method for measuring student learning and improving educational standards (Au 2007; Elwood 2012; Jager & Maag 2012). In the Australian educational context, standardised assessments have continued to attract empirical research and public interest.

As a Senior Education Officer with the Educational Measurement and School Accountability Directorate in NSW Australia in 2008, I was lead developer of online teaching strategies for the National Literacy and Numeracy Assessment, more commonly referred to as the NAPLAN. These strategies are provided to support teachers in New South Wales Department schools providing strategies to make "explicit links from the assessment to the curriculum" (ACARA 2014). This role placed me in a position to examine the NAPLAN assessments, linking each item in each test to the curriculum. During my work, niggling points around the NAPLAN writing assessment prompt began to arise. The normative practice was, and still is, to include a non-linguistic component in the writing prompt with the purpose explained as one for "supporting students in crafting their responses" (ACARA 2014). However, there was a notable absence of attention to this aspect when matching the writing task to English Syllabus K-6 outcomes (NSW BOS 2007). It seemed that semiotic analysis of the non–linguistic visual aspect was an assumed skills set for all students participating in these tests.

Assumptions that the same visual writing prompt was able to target the "full range of student capabilities from years three to nine" across Australian schools (ACARA 2014) indicated that interpretive skills for reading the non–linguistic visual aspect is taken as a given. However, as an experienced classroom practitioner who had worked in a diverse range of schools, I wondered what using the same writing prompt in the NAPLAN writing assessment might mean for school students considering the acknowledged diversity of learners in the English Syllabus (NSW BOS 2007).

While standardised assessments were introduced in 1989, the implementation of NAPLAN has raised the stakes of standardised assessments in Australia because the outcomes are not only used as a learning assessment tool within schools, used to compare schools with similar community socio–educational background, influence policy and teaching practices, but, in the name of public accountability, performance results are released to the wider public on a 'My Schools' website (ACARA 2014; Australian Curriculum 2013). These shifts in national assessment, which affect students, teachers, administrators, schools, communities and curriculum and the attention apportioned to the NAPLAN means that this assessment is 'high–stakes' (Abrams & Madaus 2003; Au 2007; Higgins; Miller & Wegmann 2006; Wyatt–Smith & Cumming 2009). The recent senate inquiry (Commonwealth of Australia 2014) and the Whitlam Report (University of Western Sydney 2013) raise significant questions regarding the growing emphasis on national testing since the establishment of NAPLAN, the validity of these assessments, the impact on teaching and learning, the cultural and linguistic appropriateness, and the accessibility of the NAPLAN content across a diverse range of student background in Australia. While research into the use of image in the reading comprehension has been undertaken (O'Donnell 2008; Unsworth 2008; Unsworth 2004) there is limited research into the role of the image in large-scale and high stakes writing assessments in Australia. My study is therefore both timely and necessary.

1.1. Large-scale standardised testing: The Australian context

In 1989, state based Basic Skills Tests for literacy and numeracy, the BST, were introduced for students in their final year of primary school introducing large-scale testing across Australia. In 1990, the Basic Skills Test was adjusted so that students in their third and fifth year of schooling would undertake the assessment rather than in their final year of primary schooling. Eight years later, in 1998, an English Language and Literacy Assessment, ELLA, was introduced to Year Seven students, with optional participation offered again in Year Eight. While common link questions were provided in the reading comprehension and grammar tests, different writing assessments were provided across primary and secondary schooling. Up until 2007, the Year Three and Year Five BST writing assessment differed from that provided to Year Seven and Eight secondary school cohorts in the ELLA.

These separate primary and secondary literacy assessments were replaced in 2008 with the NAPLAN; a national assessment for literacy and numeracy implemented across Australia for Years Three, Five, Seven and Nine. This move brought about a number of changes from the NSW state based primary BST and the secondary ELLA in a number of significant ways. First, NAPLAN performance data was published to the wider community on the My School Website as part of the then government's key education agenda giving higher credence to the student performance in NAPLAN than in previous state literacy assessments. Second, was the change to using the same visual writing stimulus for Years Three, Five, Seven and Nine. This was the first time one image and writing task was provided to all participants across years and states; a move assuming that a common image in a large–scale writing assessment prompt would 'mean something to everyone.' This approach seems to discount the diversity of learners acknowledged by the social semiotic view of learning (Chandler 2007; Halliday 1978).

Coinciding with, but separate from, the change to a national assessment for literacy and numeracy in 2008, an Australian Curriculum was being developed and subsequently released in 2012. In contrast to the homogeneous approach of using the same image for all students in the National writing assessment, the Australian Curriculum acknowledged the importance of cultural and personal authenticity for engaging the learner (Australian Curriculum 2014a; Moss; Pullin; Gee; Haertel & Jones Young 2008; Murphy 1995; Murphy & Hall 2008). Importantly, this document recognises student diversity, directing teachers to "take account of the range of their students' levels of learning, goals and interests and make adjustments where needed" (Australian Curriculum 2014a). The subsequent New South Wales Board of Studies English K–10 (Board of Studies NSW 2012) similarly acknowledges student diversity and interests. For example, the now English K–10 Syllabus document directs teachers to include "a range of stimulus materials in a range of mediums that cater for a range of learning styles and preferences to meet the diverse language usage and needs of students in ever–widening contexts" (Board of Studies NSW 2012). Therefore, while curriculum was calling teachers to provide a range of stimulus for students, a national high–stakes assessment provided one writing stimuli to engage all participants.

The current design of the national writing assessment includes an image with the presumption that this resource "can be used to assist students craft ideas" (ACARA 2014). Callow (2013, p 3) argues that while the act of reading an image may appear

quite simple, “there are a number of complex processes occurring.” Similarly, in the case of the writing assessment prompts, I argue that because students are also learning about and learning to read non–linguistic visual texts, skills in identifying and transforming potential meaning from this visual resource can play a role in how a visual prompt shapes students’ ideas for composing.

Despite the changes brought about by NAPLAN, narrative genre remained the choice for the writing task from 1989 until 2010. In 2011, the decision to change to a persuasive text as the genre was made. However, this change was short lived. In 2013, narrative returned as one of the two possible genres for the writing task. The ongoing use of narrative as a text for composing in writing assessments is reflective of the value placed on this type of text in curriculum and assessment cycles (ACARA 2012; NSW Board of Studies 2013). However, as acknowledged by the NSW BOS English K–10 Syllabus (BOS 2013) and current literature, this generation of students is accessing narrative outside of school using a wider range of non–linguistic visually dominated modes including digital technologies (Alberti 2008; Anderson 2012; Anstey & Bull 2006; Beavis & Gutierrez 2008; Bednarek & Martin 2010; Guijarro & Sanz 2008; Hoffmann 2011; Serafini 2010). The NSW BOS English K–10 Syllabus has responded to the widening textual modes accessed in society by including specific text requirements that include the close study of visual, media, multimedia and digital narrative texts from early stage one. At the same time, research from a range of scholars points out that the mere inclusion of visual multimedia and digital texts does not guarantee better learning (Bazalgette & Buckingham 2012; Beavis & Gutierrez 2008; Hunter 2013; Koh; Chai & Tay 2014; Zammit 2010). Complementing these studies, a body of research argues for the importance of learning how to ‘read the visual’ (Callow 2010; Coombes 2009; Exley & Cottrell 2012; Falk-Ross & Linder 2009; Farrell; Arizpe & McAdam 2010). These views suggest that merely including an image in assessment prompts may not always be effective if students’ skills in reading this semiotic are limited.

Considering the educational shifts in Australian Curriculum to the mandatory inclusion of a wide range of visual texts in teaching and learning from kindergarten in curriculum frameworks and classroom practices, it seems logical to include this visual semiotic in assessment tasks. However, existing research into image–text relations in BST reading comprehension tests argues that this assumption may be flawed (Daly & O'Donnell 2008; Daly & Unsworth 2011; Higgins et al. 2006; Unsworth & Chan 2009).

Findings from these studies indicate that pictures accompanying words in test items can increase the complexity of questions in reading assessments. However, despite this work there is a gap in research about the complexities that non–linguistic visual resources may play in large–scale writing assessments.

The research reported here explored the role that the non–linguistic visual aspect of writing assessment prompts plays in shaping students' responses. My study comes at a time when research acknowledges the growing sophistication of non–linguistic visual communication with this semiotic gaining greater prominence in curriculum frameworks and classroom practices (Chan 2011; Degenhardt & Duignan 2010; Gee 2007; Jewitt & Oyama 2001; Joyce et al. 1998; Kress 2003; Kress 2008; Kress 2010; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Macken-Horarik 2009; The Council of Australian Governments 2009; Unsworth 2008; Walsh 2010; Zammit 2010). Providing visual stimuli in writing assessments will not be beneficial for learner writers if they are unable to identify, engage with and use the possible meanings made available from them. The study explores the following:

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- *What resources do students draw on to assist their interpretations of visual resources provided in writing assessment prompts?*
- *How do students talk about visual writing prompts?*
- *What do students use from these prompts for their compositions?*
- *What does a metalanguage for working with non–linguistic visual resources look like?*
- *How does a metalanguage assist students to talk about and build ideas for composing a narrative using picture prompts?*

In responding to these questions, my inquiry centred on two preoccupations in social semiotics around what is said *about* and what is done *with* images (Jewitt & Oyama 2001). A semiotically informed method requires explicit analysis of the meaning potentials depicted in images. Methodologically, this approach informed my investigation by providing an explicit method for an empirical enquiry into the image component of NAPLAN writing prompts through a case study focus.

1.2. Building a method for the inquiry: A phased approach

To investigate the research questions a phased approach was taken up, with comparative case studies of four students' responses to writing assessment prompts as a focus. Drawing on Yin (2009), the selection of case study was deemed most relevant to my investigation as it provided me with the opportunity to examine the consistent use of image in high stake writing assessments as a contemporary issue in education. Comparative case study also enabled me to collect and analyse rich data from different aspects continuously throughout the period of study (Stake 2005), building a 'chain of evidence' (Yin 2009, p3) that contributed to understanding how visual prompts shape students' responses.

A first phase involved identifying assessment prompts from large–scale assessments for working with the participating students. Getting to know these resources required a way of understanding and describing them as visual texts. This led me to the design of a conceptual matrix from which two resources evolved. One of which was an analytical framework developed for a systematic content analysis of the assessment prompts. The second resource was an educational scaffold that evolved to assist my later work with the students when talking about the writing assessment prompts. The phase approach also enabled me to undertake a pilot study with one student to evaluate the effectiveness of my inquiry questions, the effectiveness of the age of the student, and the usefulness of the educational scaffold for talking with a student about visual elements in image.

Further stages in my study provided opportunities to explore how three other students responded to large–scale narrative writing assessment prompts through the comparative case study component. This case method fitted as naturally as possible into the daily lives of students, allowing me to collect credible and rich data about the processes three students undertook in their classroom writing lessons in order to make sense of the visual prompts provided to them (Yin 2009). In doing so, multiple sources of evidence were collected and analysed. These data included audio video recordings from individual interviews, a focus interview and classroom writing lessons. Data also included field notes, student writing samples and written story planning sheets they completed during their writing lessons. Each of these sources was examined in order to contribute to my understanding about the role of image as stimulus for composing (Merriam & Merriam 2009).

The phased approach was also required because during data collection for the major study, unforeseen happenings needed to be responded to. The teacher decided to assist the students with particular aspects, requiring me to change the course of my investigation in order to identify the challenges students experienced when responding to prompts unassisted. I felt this was critical for me to understand how the students puzzled out challenges independently and where complexities in translating meaning from pictures in assessment contexts. I therefore included a phase that involved me talking with the students about other prompts they identified as challenging without intervention. From this phase, a final action–orientated component provided the opportunity for me to explore the effects of a metalanguage on students' interpretation of visual prompts.

The approach also supported the semiotic orientation of this study by allowing me opportunity to account for and pay attention to the influence of students' literary interests and life experiences on how each viewed and interpreted assessment prompts (Arizpe 2009; Hasan 2005). I decided that observing students during their writing lessons and talking with them about writing prompts in their school learning setting would allow me opportunities to investigate how students puzzled out potential meanings from visual writing prompts in their natural school learning environment (Denzin & Lincoln 2005; Stake 2006; Yin 2008).

1.2.1. Selecting students for my study

Three primary students were recruited for the major study and one for a pilot study. The data from the pilot study were drawn on to constitute a fourth case. Year Four students were chosen because they had already undertaken the NAPLAN writing assessment in Year Three. With familiarity of the assessment task, time could be better devoted on exploring how the students worked with potential meanings in the prompts rather than on explaining the assessment task itself.

I had known the parents of the primary school student that agreed to be involved in the pilot study. After two informal conversations and providing them with an overview of my research intentions in writing, their son Noah willingly agreed, and his mother granted permission for him to be involved. Selecting students for the larger study was facilitated by previous access to a suburban school community who were aware of literacy workshops I had given in the region. The Assistant Principal indicated initial interest in my investigation through an informal conversation after one of the

workshops. The Assistant Principal then introduced me to the School Principal where we arranged for a time to meet, where I then outlined my research proposal. During this more formal meeting, the School Principal expressed strong interest in knowing more about factors that could influence the NAPLAN scores, indicating the parent community of her school placed a high degree of credence on the published NAPLAN results (Observational notes July 2010). She invited me to outline my research proposal in a scheduled meeting to staff on the school grounds. Then, on my behalf, the principal invited the year four teachers to be involved and Mrs Millar, one of the Year Four teachers volunteered. The selection of year four students was purposeful and was identified as an effective student age in the pilot study.

All students in Mrs Millar's class were given permission notes to be involved in the study. While most students returned their notes with granted permission, the teacher selected three students who she deemed suitably cooperative. Under these circumstances, where students would be required to move in and out of class and actively take part in a number of group interviews each for over half an hour, her recommendations were valuable and heeded. As a result of this process, Thomas, Pamela and Ella were recruited as participants for the larger study.

Comparability was an important part of this study as I was challenging the capacity of the same image to equally stimulate a small number of apprentice writers. Selecting the students from the same grade was therefore purposeful. Further studies across contexts and year groups would provide further comparative research for understanding more about the cultural neutrality of one writing assessment prompt as a stimulus for all students. In the remainder of this chapter I will discuss the phases of my inquiry.

1.2.2.Phased approach

My analysis commenced from the beginning of data collection and continued throughout six inquiry phases. These phases are now outlined.

Phase one: Selecting and analysing visual writing assessment prompts

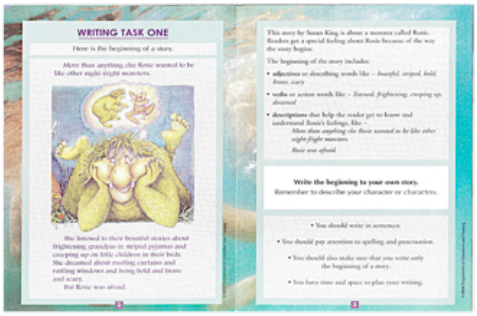
I decided on using images that were designed specifically for primary aged students for the purpose of composing a narrative. As a result, permission was sought to use visual writing prompts from past NSW Basic Skills and National Writing Assessment

tasks used over a significant time period. The following list is the result of prompts from 2000–2010 that were offered to me with approval granted and thus shaped the selection of prompts used in my analysis (ACARA 2010, 2009; Curriculum Corporation 2009; DET 2008, 2007, 2005, 2004, 2000). These prompts can be viewed in Figure 1.1. An enlarged view of the writing assessment prompts is also provided in Appendices A-I and the brochure inset in the hard copy of this thesis.

- The 2000 BST writing prompt image '*Rosie'*
- The 2004 BST writing prompt image '*The Ancient Box'*
- The 2005 BST writing prompt image '*The Storm'*
- The 2007 BST writing prompt image '*The Egg'*
- The 2008 NAPLAN writing prompt image '*Found'*
- The 2009 NAPLAN writing prompt image '*The Box'*
- The 2010 NAPLAN writing prompt image '*What a Mess!'*

A conceptual matrix was developed as a way for systematically organising social semiotic principles derived from a metafunctional approach to visual analysis identified by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006). The metafunctional approach also draws on Halliday's (1978) functional approach to language that recognises three main kinds of semiotic work that takes place simultaneously. These metafunctions are termed the ideational, interpersonal and textual functions. Kress and Van Leeuwen use comparable terminology to label these functions which are said to occur simultaneously in image as: representational instead of ideational, interactional instead of interpersonal and compositional instead of textual (Halliday 2002; Halliday 2004; Jewitt & Oyama 2001; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006). The theories involved in informing the *conceptual matrix* are described in chapter two.

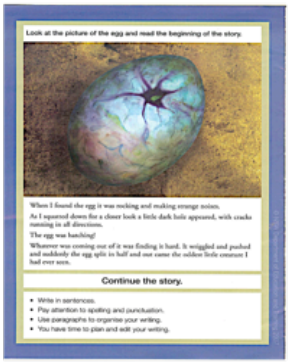
Two additional resources evolved from *the conceptual matrix*. The first was an *analytical framework* that I used as a tool for evaluating the writing assessment prompts (See Appendices A-I). Essentially this was a 'code,' which I applied when analysing the non–linguistic image in the prompts. This was an important step before meeting with the students because one of the key assumptions in semiotic theory is that meaning is made as choices from sign systems. Knowing the possible meanings available in the prompts assisted me to recognise signs, which interested and engaged the students (Kress 2007; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Unsworth 2008).



NSW Department of Education 2000, Primary Writing Assessment 2000 Writing Task 2 ***Rosie***

NSW Department of Education 2004, Primary Writing Assessment Writing Task 2, ***The Ancient Box***

NSW Department of Education 2005, BST Writing Prompt ***The Storm***



NSW Department of Education 2007, BST Writing Prompt ***The Egg***

NSW Department of Education 2008, NAPLAN Writing Prompt, ***Found***

Curriculum Corporation 2009, NAPLAN Writing Prompt, ***The Red Box***

Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority 2010, NAPLAN Writing Prompt, ***What a Mess!***

FIGURE 1.1: The selection of BST and the NAPLAN visual writing assessment prompts

Secondly *the conceptual matrix* also informed the development of an *educational scaffold* which recontextualised theoretical language into more concrete language suitable for engaging primary aged students. This scaffold was used to guide the conversations I had with students using a metalanguage during the intervention phase

of the study. Both the *analytical framework* and the *educational scaffold* are described in detail during chapter three.

Phase two: Informing the case study methodology through a pilot study

As Yin (2009) points out, a pilot study is critical to test the propositions, questions and method of inquiry for exploring the issue. Drawing on this perspective, the key focus for the pilot study I undertook was to identify the appropriateness of the research design for the larger study. Noah, a year four student, was recruited for the pilot study through a prior social connection. After several informal conversations and clarifications about my project with Noah and his mother, they willingly agreed to participate in the research. Noah took part in three 40-minute sessions after school, once a week in his own home. Noah chose the home office to work in, as well as the day and time for the weekly afternoon sessions. The information from Noah's pilot was used as one case in addition to the three cases analysing Thomas, Pamela and Ella's responses to the visual prompts in the later chapters. The phase involving a single case as a pilot study helped me to:

- Confirm the effectiveness of the visual assessment prompts as a resource for learning about how a student puzzles out possible meanings from non-linguistic visual narrative representations.

- Use and evaluate data collection techniques including identifying any logistical issues with audio recordings and timeframes for data collection.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of designed interview questions and the use of specific visual metalanguage when talking about the visual prompts for writing a story (Hoffman et al 2011). For example, I narrowed some of my questions to focus on the pictures and broadened others to provide opportunities to incorporate their own interests and preferences for reading image.

- Verify the appropriateness of the student's age and experience to warrant further purposive sampling of year four students for the larger study (Barone 2011; Stake 2005).

Phase three: The case studies

As a starting point with the three students that were participants in the main study, I conducted individual semi–structured interviews and then group interviews in the context of their writing lessons conducted by their classroom teacher. The use of semi

–structured interviews was deemed most effective for learning about students' values, attitudes and knowledge about reading image. I provided questions that guided the conversation around the inquiry, but were open enough to allow me to explore students' perspectives about reading and responding to narrative image (Creswell 2007; Yin 2009). Informal chats with the students also occurred naturally before and after the semi–structured individual, group and focus interview. The informal conversations before and after our meetings provided further opportunity for talking with the students about their writing lessons, their experiences with the visual writing prompts and their social interests outside of school. Due to the serendipitous nature of the informal interactions with the students, I recorded this commentary as field notes in my journal during or directly after each field visit.

What the larger study provided that I was unable to ascertain from Noah, was the opportunity to observe how students responded to the types of stimuli provided in everyday learning in a school environment and how they puzzled out meaning potentials for writing a story with other students in a natural learning setting.

The first undertaking in this phase took the form of 30–minute individual semi–structured interviews designed to find out more about each students' literary and social interests as resources they brought to their writing tasks. All these interactions were recorded using a digital recorder and then later transcribed. With limited space and noise issues in the students' classroom, the individual interviews were conducted in a meeting room in the school administration area.

This phase also involved collecting data from the interactions between the students and their teacher during two writing lessons. Data was collected through field notes because permission was not granted to audio record students in the class who were not involved directly in the research. Material data consisting of the students' planning pages and their subsequent compositions were also collected for later analysis. This data is reported on in chapters five and six. My role during these lessons was predominantly that of observer. This observation role was purposeful in order to track the natural flow and problem solving that the students were involved in as they responded to visual stimuli, then planned and executed a story using their generated ideas.

Before observing the students' writing lessons, I met with Mrs Millar informally over morning coffee to discuss our interactions over the next few weeks. During this first informal meeting, I provided her with the range of BST and NAPLAN visual writing assessment prompts I had been given permission to use. We decided she would incorporate these as stimulus during a second writing lesson so I could collect data on how the students responded to these prompts unassisted and what ideas they incorporated in their subsequent story. Observing the classroom writing lessons as case studies provided me with information about the dynamics and dimensions of three students' learning experiences (Barone 2011).

Prior to these writing lessons, I also conducted a 45–minute semi–structured interview with Mrs Millar asking questions about her students' needs, her approach to teaching writing and the students' skills in reading image. Because of the nature of school and the time of the term, most other interactions were brief and informal conversations outside of the semi–structured interview time 'on the run' to class or after the writing lessons. The interview and brief informal conversations were all supplemented by a detailed email from Mrs Millar after my infield research was completed. Her comments are included in my analysis in chapters four and five.

Phase four: The focus interview

After observing the students during two writing lessons, I conducted a focus interview to understand more about the possible meaning potentials the students recognised from visual assessment prompts. The focus interview was an unexpected phase that occurred because the teacher decided to assist students to interpret the writing assessment prompt that they identified as most challenging during their writing lesson. During this focus interview, I used guiding questions to encourage Thomas, Pamela and Ella's conversation about the BST and NAPLAN writing assessment prompts. Despite these questions, the students' responses remained relatively unassisted in order to identify the strategies they used and the visual elements they engaged with during their interpretive process. This method provided valuable information about the students' existing knowledge about images that served to triangulate with other data collected.

Phase five: Working with the students using a visual metalanguage

This intervention phase of my research was action–orientated as it involved introducing the students to some concepts of visual semiosis through a common meta-language

for reading the visual writing prompts. Action orientated research was deemed relevant for this phase as it focuses on implementing an action to assess the value of a supportive metalanguage in addressing challenges that the students experienced when interpreting some of the prompts within a specific setting (Balone 2011). As participant observer I talked with the students about the prompts via a series of probes developed by drawing on the *educational scaffold* (Merriam & Merriam 2009). I deemed this approach appropriate because it enabled me to recontextualise theoretical language for reading image to more everyday concrete language suited for these primary school students. I was also provided the opportunity to observe how the students used the language during their conversations about the prompt.

The initial research design intended to include a writing task, which flowed from the intervention. This was a key aspect of the research given the moves to go from viewing to planning and then finally creating a written narrative drawing on the visual prompts, which I will argue are challenging for some students. However unforeseen events resulted in more time being required to complete phase four. Without additional time approved to remain in the school, this writing stage of phase five could not be undertaken. I recognise there is a need for further research into how students work the more connotative meanings derived from an informed interpretation of a visual prompt into their written stories.

During this phase, I also involved the students in an evaluation of the support that the educational scaffold provided them during their interpretive process. The evaluative process was undertaken during this last session, allowing the impact of a language framework to be described by the new users (Lewis 2013). The students' responses provided me with a number of perspectives about the usefulness of a semiotically orientated metalanguage to assist students identify potential meanings in visual writing prompts.

Phase six: Reflecting back on the data

I reflected on the analysis undertaken throughout the thesis and of each participant's responses. By looking for patterns across the cases, I identified commonalities and differences amongst the analyses (Denzin & Lincoln 2005). Using colour coding I looked for patterns in and across the cases, identifying commonalities and differences amongst the analyses (Denzin & Lincoln 2005). Thus the final phase includes reflective statements about the cases and highlights possible pedagogical implications that

contribute to a wider body of knowledge on reading image and assessment. The reflection phase also offers areas for further research with a broader range of students and teachers across different contexts, year grades, intervention cycles and the use of a visual stimulus for composing different writing assessment genre.

1.3. Timeframe and relevance of the study

My research is a product of its time, undertaken in 2009 in one diverse classroom within a specific timeframe and is therefore historically and culturally specific (Barone 2011; Denzin & Lincoln 2005; Wright 2003). This is relevant to consider with the educational changes occurring in Australia and the ever–widening diversity of students and contexts recognised by education (Australian Curriculum 2014a; Board of Studies NSW 2013; Ministerial Council of Education 2008). Since my study began to take form in 2009, educational shifts have been underway with an Australian Curriculum released in 2012. The succeeding year saw a subsequent release of the NSW Board of Studies English K–10 Syllabus followed by initial implementation in 2014.

Shifts are also purported to be occurring in national assessment programs, with ACARA already moving towards delivering NAPLAN from paper based texts to online assessment (Australian Curriculum 2014b; Wasson 2009). Recent reports indicated that NAPLAN is moving online from 2016 (ACARA 2015). For the first time in late 2014, Principals were able to view NAPLAN images online. At this stage the NSW Board of Studies (2014) anticipates that "access to the images may aid the professional development of teachers, especially when the images are used in conjunction with the NAPLAN marking criteria rubric". These curriculum and assessment moves suggest understanding the role non–linguistic visual stimuli plays an important role in students' interpretation of meaning potentials from image.

While research exists about the complexity of image–text relations in basic skills reading comprehension assessments (Chan & Unsworth 2009; Daly & O'Donnell 2008; Unsworth; Thomas & Bush 2004), my thesis addresses a significant gap in the field regarding the role that pictures play as stimulus in shaping students' subsequent compositions in large-scale standardised writing assessments such as BST and NAPLAN. My research is timely considering current curriculum in Australia that acknowledges the increased salience of images and the mandatory inclusion of visual, media and multimodal texts in the teaching and learning cycles from kindergarten

(Australian Curriculum 2014a; Board of Studies NSW 2013). While current debates argue that literate practices are increasingly involved in the co–construction of meaning using sophisticated and often dominating non–linguistic visual aspects (Chan & Unsworth 2009; Jewitt 2009; Kress 2008), this thesis demonstrates, despite the growing salience of pictures in curriculum and assessment, that not all students are able to access the full meaning potentials offered by this visual semiotic. While this is not expected of all, particularly young apprentice readers, limited skills in reading this resource impacted the quality and quantity of meaning potentials identified. The findings challenge the use of image as 'culturally neutral and naturally available' and that visual stimulus intuitively 'triggers' an outpouring of creativity for all students participating in writing assessments. I contend that more needs to be done to teach about reading non-linguistic visuals and how to apply this knowledge in various instances. The application of such knowledge about, and skills to work with this semiotic should not be 'ad hoc'. Rather, teaching and learning about non-linguistic visual resources should be systematic, explicit and contextually linked with the close study of texts, aligning with the mandatory inclusion of visual texts in the Australian Curriculum.

1.4. Overview of the thesis

This chapter has provided the background and context for the study. In chapter two this is developed by locating the inquiry within the field of semiotics, also exploring the theoretical framework for the research. It outlines two theories from linguistic and non–linguistic semiotic domains that act as points of departure for the research and analysis. The way the two domains of social semiotic theory and narrative theory assist my investigation is argued.

The following chapter three details *the conceptual matrix* underpinning social semiotic theories for reading image. The third chapter is concerned with explaining the development of *the analytical framework* and how I used this framework to examine the visual prompts. The chapter also describes the development of *the educational scaffold* used with students during the intervention phase.

Chapter four extends on chapter three by using the analytical framework to examine the visual prompts. Chapters five and six then report the results of the study. The concluding chapter reflects on the findings and interpretations presented. It discusses the nature of the semiotic work required for interpreting non–linguistic visual prompts

for these four students, together with the effects of a metalanguage on their responses. The final chapter argues that images in visual writing assessments inhabit an interpretive space that is complex. I would argue that how accomplished students are at interpreting an image may shape the stories they write and hence impact their writing scores in these high–stakes assessments.

Chapter two

Social semiotic perspectives on visual texts

This chapter locates the inquiry within the field of social semiotics. A key tenet of social semiotic theory is that signs represent and communicate meaning in different contexts (Barnard 2001; Halliday 2002; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Machin 2007; Sonesson 2007). From this perspective, while signs can be visual, verbal or aural in nature, all signs irrespective of their form, create texts that are used within a social context to make meaning (Thibault 1991). Social semiotics grows out of wider structuralist traditions of Ferdinand Saussure (1910), later work by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Chandler (2002) who argue that the way we 'put things into words' (2002 p 124) is shaped by particular views of language. This perspective also argues that a viewer's understanding of realities is framed within systems of analogy and prior experience. Social semiotics is therefore a useful overarching theoretical framework for my inquiry into the role of 'image' as a meaning–making sign in writing assessment tasks, as it embraces both non-linguistic and linguistic signs considering what is show, the purpose of the sign shown, who is reading and who is producing the signs (Barthes 1977; Barnard 2001; Chandler 2007; Machin 2009; Saussure 2006; Thibault 2004; Vygotsky 1978).

Narrative theory falls within social semiotics as it deals with the realisation of linguistic and non-linguistic signs in terms of communicating meaning through a distinctive social purpose and organisational structure (Huisman 2007; Labov 1997; Toolan 2001). A key principle on which this theory is based is the study of how signs convey stories about human experience in and of the world while also examining how stories are interpreted (Labov 1997). Both theories contribute different aspects of signs and sign making, working with similar notions about available forms, structures and classifications across semiotic resources. Theorists also recognise that while non–linguistic visual resources can say a number of the same things as linguistic visual resources they do so in different ways (Kress & Van Lueewen 2006; Lemke 2002; Painter & Martin 2012; Unsworth 2006; Unsworth & Cleirigh 2009).

Hence a social semiotic theoretical approach to investigating visual narrative realised linguistically and non–linguistically was taken for my study. Social semiotic theory

provided a model for analyses of the images used in selected BST and NAPLAN visual writing prompts around the social functions for meaning making. These social functions include depicting people, places and events (representational function), conveying interactions and connections between participants and between participants and viewers (interactional function), and how the text enabled these functions (compositional function). Narrative theory contributed to the analyses of the prompts by providing tools to recognise how non-linguistic visual narrative constituted a story aspect in a single visual frame (Barthes 1975; Huang 2014). This theory also assisted my analyses of students' oral responses to visual writing assessment prompts and their subsequent compositions in terms of the ideas they generated and those that eventuated in their stories.

The social semiotic approach to visual narrative also informed the development of an educational scaffold to use when talking with the students about meaning potentials from BST ad NAPLAN writing assessment prompts. In sum, the theoretical framework explained in this chapter offered a multi dimensional view for investigating how visual narrative assessment prompts shape students' written responses.

2.1. Social semiotic theory

2.1.1. Images in the context of production and reception

A social semiotic perspective to analysing an image explains that an image produced is but one aspect in the meaning making process (Barthes 1977; Mitchell 2005; Van Leeuwen 2010). As illustrated in Figure 2.1, the meaning making process is also concerned with the social practices and cultures of the sign-reader, the sign-maker as well *as* the social practice that the image reflects, sustains and impacts on what is produced and how the image is interpreted (Halliday 2002; Hodge & Kress 1988; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Lister & Wells 2001; Thibault 1991). As expressed in Figure 2.1, meaning is therefore shaped by the viewer's stance, their understandings, the purpose of viewing as well as the purpose and the site an image is produced (Lister & Wells 2001; Thibault 1991; Van Leeuwen 2010). In sum, the social semiotic approach to image is based on the following assumptions:

1. Images are sites for enacting social relations, transmitting culture and values. They can express, validate, challenge or change social power relations (Jewitt & Oyama 2001; Lister & Wells 2001).

2. What is seen in images is shaped and constrained by the purpose and situation in which images are viewed. Viewer, producer, culture and context play a role in what is seen (Arnheim 1969; Chandler 2007; Lister & Wells 2001; Rosenblatt 1983).
3. Responses to an image are limited by sign-readers' prior experiences that may differ from the author of the image. This statement reasons that a sign-reader interprets an image by drawing on what they know and recognise. This may result in images being interpreted from a particular vantage point that is different from the creator's intentions, or it may result in meanings being omitted or overlooked because they are not 'seen' (Arnheim 1969; Barthes 1977; Rosenblatt 1983; Van Leeuwen 2010).

Given that reading an image is socially shaped and culturally given (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Thibault 1991), a sign produced in context may stand for something in different ways for each viewer (Peirce 1931). Multiple systems are at play when creating and interpreting meaning. Figure 2.1 illustrates that meaning is influenced by the purposes for viewing, together with the sign reader's cultural and world experiences. Therefore, in relation to my inquiry, social semiotic principles suggest that students come to read an image bringing diverse backgrounds and experiences with them as resources for responding to the signs made available.

Thus, visual writing prompts may mean something different to each viewer, or possibly mean nothing at all. While it is not expected that *all* sign-readers interpret the same meaning from an image, questions need to be raised about the use of one visual writing assessment prompt across a large cohort of student participants. Yet, NAPLAN clearly states the writing prompt "includes an image which can support students in crafting their responses" (ACARA 2014). However, given the socio–cultural diversity across the Australian educational context, the following questions need to be considered:

- What if the picture used is outside the cultural experiences of the students?
- What if the nature of the image reduces the choices students make in selecting meaning potentials for their writing?

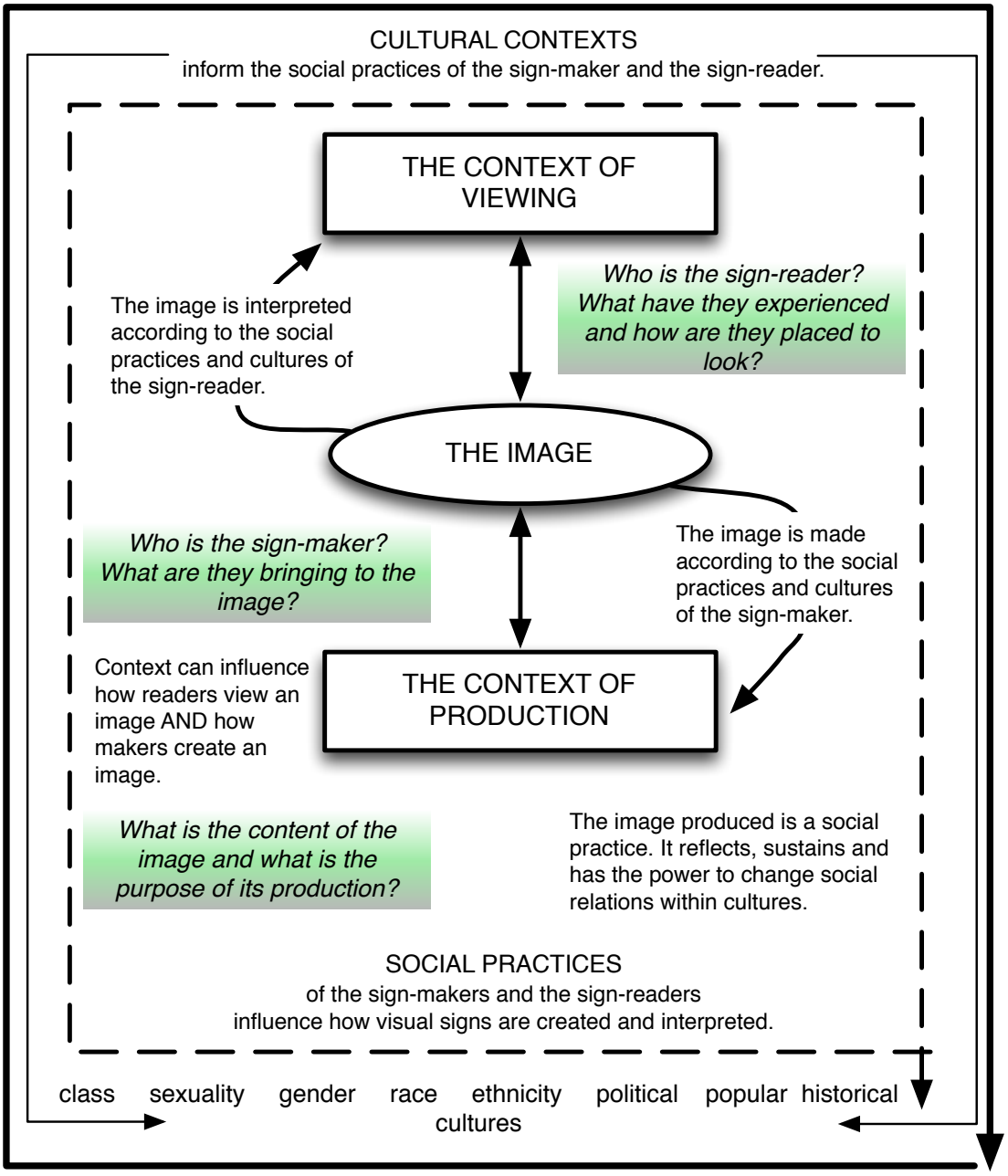


FIGURE 2.1: Viewing image in writing prompts from a social semiotic approach

My inquiry into the role image played in shaping students' compositions is timely and important considering the use of image in large–scale writing assessments. Investigating image as a communicator of meaning assists knowledge about the non-linguistic visual aspect in these types of assessment prompts as a factor influencing the ideas generated and the writing that eventuates. Of course teaching is not about teaching to a test (Dreher 2012; Higgins; Miller & Wegmann 2006), nevertheless a more informed and developmental approach to teaching non-linguistic 'image' as part of the curriculum would benefit students.

2.1.2. Resources for analysis: Linguistic and non–linguistic relations

As stated earlier in this chapter, social semiotics is concerned with meaning-making resources exchanged within social-cultural relations (Thibault 1991). Semiotic resources used to communicate meanings may include linguistic and non-linguistic systems. Yet, the necessity of a linguistic resource to support non-linguistic representations, as well as the role and the relationship between these two resources is debated (Cazden et al. 1996; Harrison 2003; Martinec & Salway 2005; Unsworth & Cleirigh 2009). Some argue pictures cannot represent meaning without words (Bal 1985). Theorists supporting this view explain that linguistic resources (words) are a necessary accompaniment to non–linguistic resources (pictures) because words serve to:

- Elaborate visual codes to complete each other as part of a whole or 'translate into the other's medium' (Gilman 1980)
- Clarify and 'anchor' meaning represented in the image (Bal 1991)
- Co–operate with pictures but show different, which contributes to the totality of the information (Barthes 1977; Painter & Martin 2012)
- Build ideas as viewers move from picture to text, extending and transforming meaning from both modes (Shannon & Weaver 1949 cited Kress 2006).

Other theorists argue non–linguistic visual resources can realise meaning without the accompaniment of or elaboration in verbiage (Arnheim 1969; Kress 2010; Machin 2009). Along with the view that 'images can hold their own', a commonly held outlook is that non–linguistic visual resources are an increasingly dominant semiotic resource, subordinating or omitting verbiage to realise meaning in the visual mode (Callow 2013; Jewitt 2009; Jewitt & Oyama 2001; Unsworth 2008). This view acknowledges non–linguistic visual resources can be a self-sufficient, but that pictures can accompany verbiage to create meaning. When verbiage and image work together in a total composition, they play specific roles creating different relations (Chan 2011; Martin 2011). These relations, illustrated in Figure 2.2, are termed as either *complementarity* (where each semiotic contributes to the total meaning of the prompt) or *concurrence* relations (where each semiotic offers the same information as text or as pictures. *Complementarity relations* between image and verbiage occur when each semiotic resource works to provide new information to complete overall concepts (Chan 2011). These terms are also used by semiotic functional linguistics and current debate

discusses whether the use of common terms acts to assist or confuse semiotic analysis across words and pictures (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; O'Halloran 2004; Painter 2012).

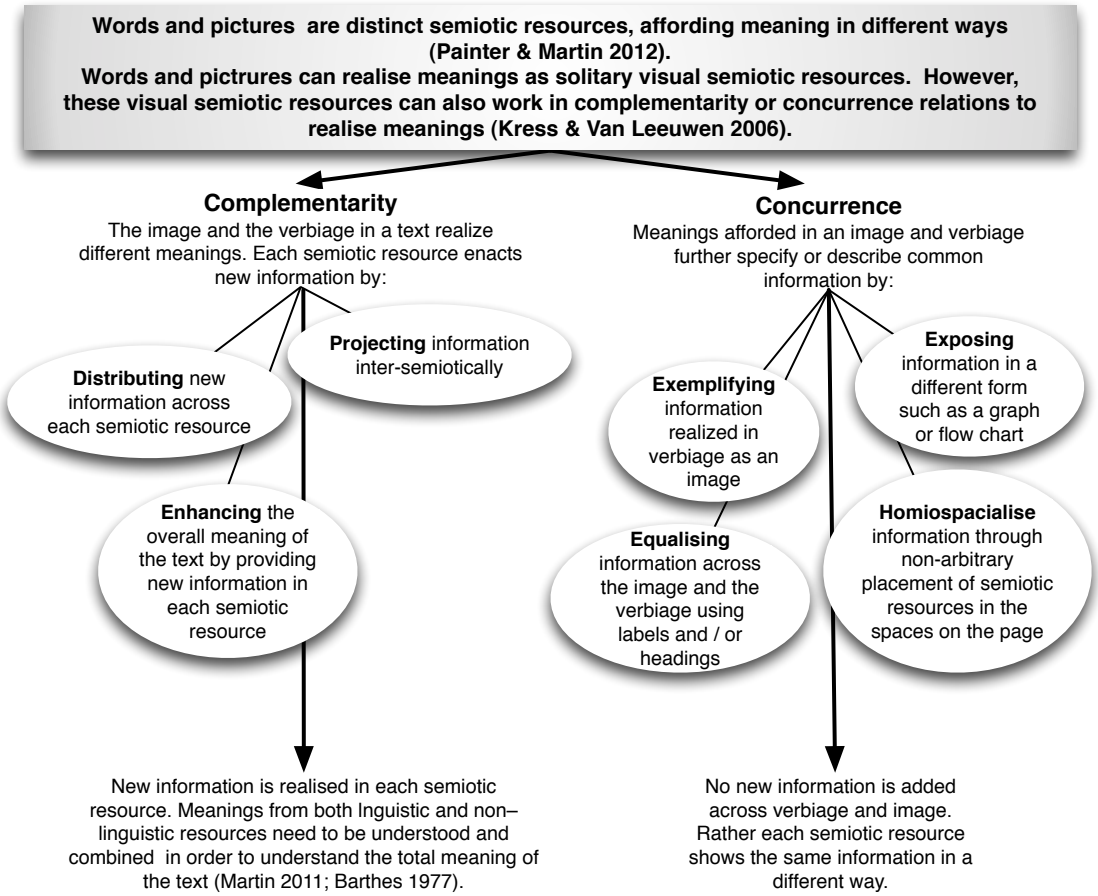


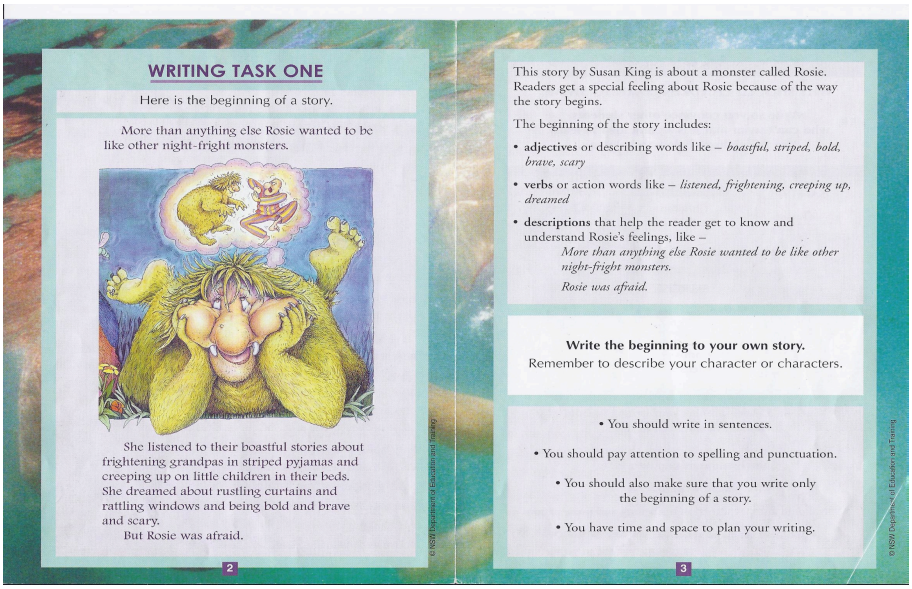
FIGURE 2.2: Complementarity and concurrence relations in image

Complementary and concurrent relations are evident in the writing assessment prompts in varying ways. Figure 2.3 presents one example of complementarity relations because the words and the picture show different information diverging across the visual semiotic resources.

The non–linguistic component of the BST writing prompt 'Rosie' depicted in Figure 2.3 shows a monster dreaming about two participants that are also viewable to the sign-reader. Accompanying the illustration is verbiage, which provides new information to that presented in the picture component. In this way, verbiage is said to create complementarity relations with the picture by:

1. *Distributing* information about Rosie's feelings that are not substantiated in the image. That is the image illustrates the monster smiling but the verbiage reveals, "Rosie was afraid."

2. *Enhancing* information about the illustrated monster: for example, the image shows a monster and the verbiage enhances the sign-reader's knowledge about the monster by providing additional information such as a name 'Rosie', the type of monster and its gender by saying, "More than anything else Rosie wanted to be like other night-fright monsters. She listened to…"
3. *Projecting* information about Rosie's feelings and attitude. The verbiage reminds sign-readers to include "descriptions that help the reader get to know and understand Rosie's feelings" when writing a story beginning projecting information across both visual semiotics.



WRITING TASK ONE

Here is the beginning of a story.

More than anything else Rosie wanted to be like other night-fright monsters.

She listened to their boastful stories about frightening grandpas in striped pyjamas and creeping up on little children in their beds. She dreamed about rustling curtains and rattling windows and being bold and brave and scary.

But Rosie was afraid.

2

This story by Susan King is about a monster called Rosie. Readers get a special feeling about Rosie because of the way the story begins.

The beginning of the story includes:

- **adjectives** or describing words like – *boastful, striped, bold, brave, scary*
- **verbs** or action words like – *listened, frightening, creeping up, dreamed*
- **descriptions** that help the reader get to know and understand Rosie's feelings, like –
  More than anything else Rosie wanted to be like other night-fright monsters.
  Rosie was afraid.

Write the beginning to your own story.
Remember to describe your character or characters.

- You should write in sentences.
- You should pay attention to spelling and punctuation.
- You should also make sure that you write only the beginning of a story.
- You have time and space to plan your writing.

3

FIGURE 2.3: Example of complementarity relations in the 2000 BST writing prompt 'Rosie'

Complementary image-verbiage relations can vary in complexity. With increased difficulty, both the skills and time requirements for interpreting the potential meanings may also escalate. The degree of complementarity varied across the prompts over the years of implementation and, within the prompts. The following Figure 2.4 is an example of a NAPLAN prompt, 'Found', using multiple complementary image-verbiage relations. In this example, the inclusion of multiple pictures within the text requires viewers to construe meanings in and across the pictures that connect with the verbiage in different ways.

Reading this text involves a series of choices about the connections or disconnections amongst the pictures. For example, the footprints in the sand can be connected with the treasure map and the treasure chest as possible story components dealing with people

and places. Yet, other pictures shown in close proximity on the same page are not related and need to be dismissed or disconnected from each other. For example, a set of keys, a dog in the arms of a human, and the drawing of a fossil are unlikely to be participants and settings from the same narrative. Interpretive work involves students in choices – choices involving them in identifying what is depicted and selecting those that link together irrespective of their proximity on the page. The relations between pictures and the words also need to be considered. For example, the title 'Found' provides additional information that enhances potential connections amongst pictures. In this way, complementary image-verbiage relations are also used in this text because different affordances from linguistic and non–linguistic visual resources enhance meaning from this text. Responding to the types of writing prompts provided in writing assessments requires working with such intra–semiotic and inter–semiotic relations in the texts. That is, readers interpret relations in each picture and amongst the pictures (Exley & Cottrell 2012; O'Halloran 2008; Royce 2002). They also need to respond to inter–semiotic relations across linguistic and the non–linguistic resources on the page (Exley & Cottrell 2012; Painter & Martin 2012). In relation to the use of both visual semiotic resources in current writing assessment prompts, complementarity relations of this type can create another layer of complexity for sign–readers rather than functioning to 'open' more meaning potentials as stimulus for the writing task required of them.

FIGURE 2.4: Verbiage-image complementarity relations in the 2008 NAPLAN writing prompt

Linguistic visual and non–linguistic visual resources do not always work to represent new or different information that contributes to the meaning of the text as a whole. Visual resources can also act together to represent the same information across different semiotic modes in a relationship of *concurrence.* Kress (2010) explains that texts working this way expose, equalise, exemplify or homospacialise the same information in

each semiotic resource. An example of this type of relationship would be a drawing of a fireman with words labelling his equipment and uniform, or an x–ray with linguistic information identifying the bones. Most common examples of concurrence relations are non–linguistic visual resources that show processes and sequences in conceptual or analytical information visually. Depending on the context of use, these types of relations can be less complex because each semiotic is offering the same information.

Despite the minimal use of concurrent relations in the visual writing assessment prompts, Figure 2.5 illustrates a high degree of concurrence between the image and the verbiage in the 2009 NAPLAN visual writing prompt 'The Box.' This example illustrates a close duplication of meaning presented between the picture and the linguistic visual semiotic resource. The text comprises an image of a red box, accompanied by verbiage. The image of a red box and the verbiage in the title – 'The Box' offer very similar representational information, thus are said to be in concurrence relations.

The relations between pictures and words in the example shown in Figure 2.5 can also be understood to be complementarity because the picture provides additional information to that provided by the words. For example, the title in the visual prompt shown in Figure 2.5 labels the picture as 'The Box.' However, visual elements in the image such as colour, light and shadow, shape, texture and perspective provides additional information about the object. Unsworth and Cleirigh (2009) explain this type of relationship as one where the picture reveals qualities about the character (or object) that is not revealed by the verbiage. Thus, while the words and the picture are at similar levels of generality, more specific information is provided in the non–linguistic semiotic.

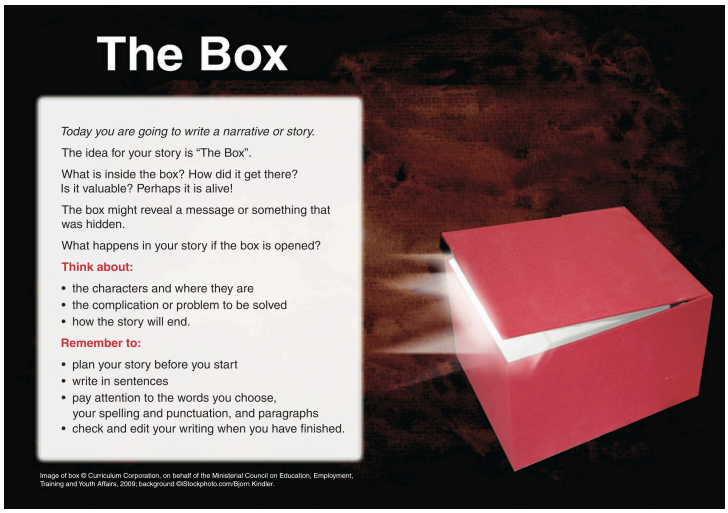


FIGURE 2.5: Concurrence and complementarity in the 2009 NAPLAN writing prompt

‘The Box’ prompt illustrates an example of the ties that are created by complementary relations between words and pictures to instantiate meaning in a text. For example, the linguistic information within the solid white section on the left of the prompt, positions the viewer to think about particular meaning represented in the picture component of the prompt by saying, “The idea for your story is the box.” At this point, the words and the picture offer concurrent relations exposing the same information in a different visual form. However, the words continue, offering more representational information than the picture shows by suggesting that, “The box might reveal a hidden message or something that was hidden.” Here, the words and picture act together in complementary relations, offering different information to enhance the overall meaning of the text.

Relations between words and pictures can function to further specify common information. This being the case, both words and pictures exemplify the same information, equalize or match information with the pictures through headings or labels. These relations expose the same information through linguistic and non-linguistic resources and can arrange this information in a compositional way within a defined space. The difference between these relations is that when image-verbiage relations act in complementarity, understanding the distinctive potentials offered by each resource makes use of the full range of meaning potential offered by the text.

In addition to the varying relations between image and verbiage, the salience of each semiotic can vary in each instance. In further relation to my inquiry, when prompts are dominated by complementary relations, in particular dominated by non-linguistic visual resources, then the need to understand the potential meanings offered by the non-linguistic visual resource is increased if viewers are to access the full range of meaning potentials offered by assessment prompts.

2.2. Social semiotic analysis of an image

To map out non-linguistic meaning potentials, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) have developed a model using a functional approach to visual language after Halliday’s systemic functional linguistic theory (1978). This approach is based on the idea that like language, visual semiosis involves three major functions acting simultaneously. Thus we select from available visual semiotic resources to:

- Represent our experience of the world – the *ideational function*. This is also referred to as the *representational* function of image.
- Interact with others in the world involving action in and on the environment – the *interpersonal function*. This is also referred to as the *interactional* function of image.
- Create coherent and cohesive texts – the *textual function*. This is also referred to as the *compositional* function of image.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, while Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, p. 41) state that these metafunctions work together simultaneously to represent a "full system of communication" they also make it clear that the use of terms from Halliday's linguistic model does not imply that pictures work in the same way as words. Similar to other arguments, they claim that non–linguistic visual resources can say a number of the same things as linguistic visual resources but in different ways (Lemke 2002; Painter & Martin 2012; Unsworth 2006; Unsworth & Cleirigh 2009). The metafunctions are illustrated in Figure 2.6 and then each discussed in turn.

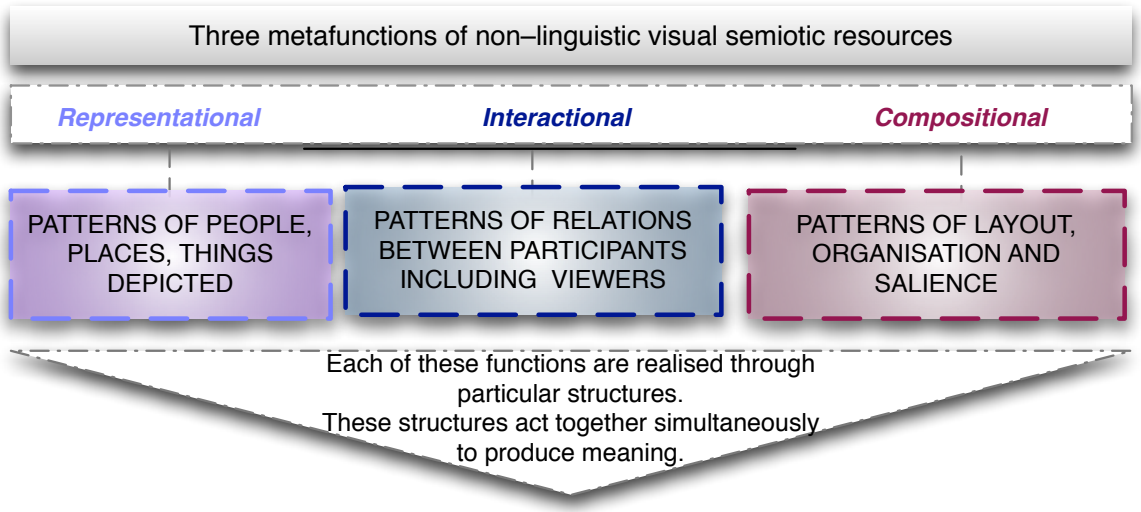


FIGURE 2.6: The three metafunctions of non–linguistic visual semiotic resources

2.2.1. The representational metafunction

The representational metafunction deals with aspects of the world as life is experienced (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006). With respect to image, these aspects are represented visually through two contrasting patterns: *narrative* and *conceptual representations*. Figure 2.7 illustrates these two classifications and the terms used to describe the opposing representational structures. The two patterns of representation serve different

functions. Narrative representations present action processes, projections, events or circumstances (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006). These types of images represent participants in a process of change or transitory spatial arrangements.

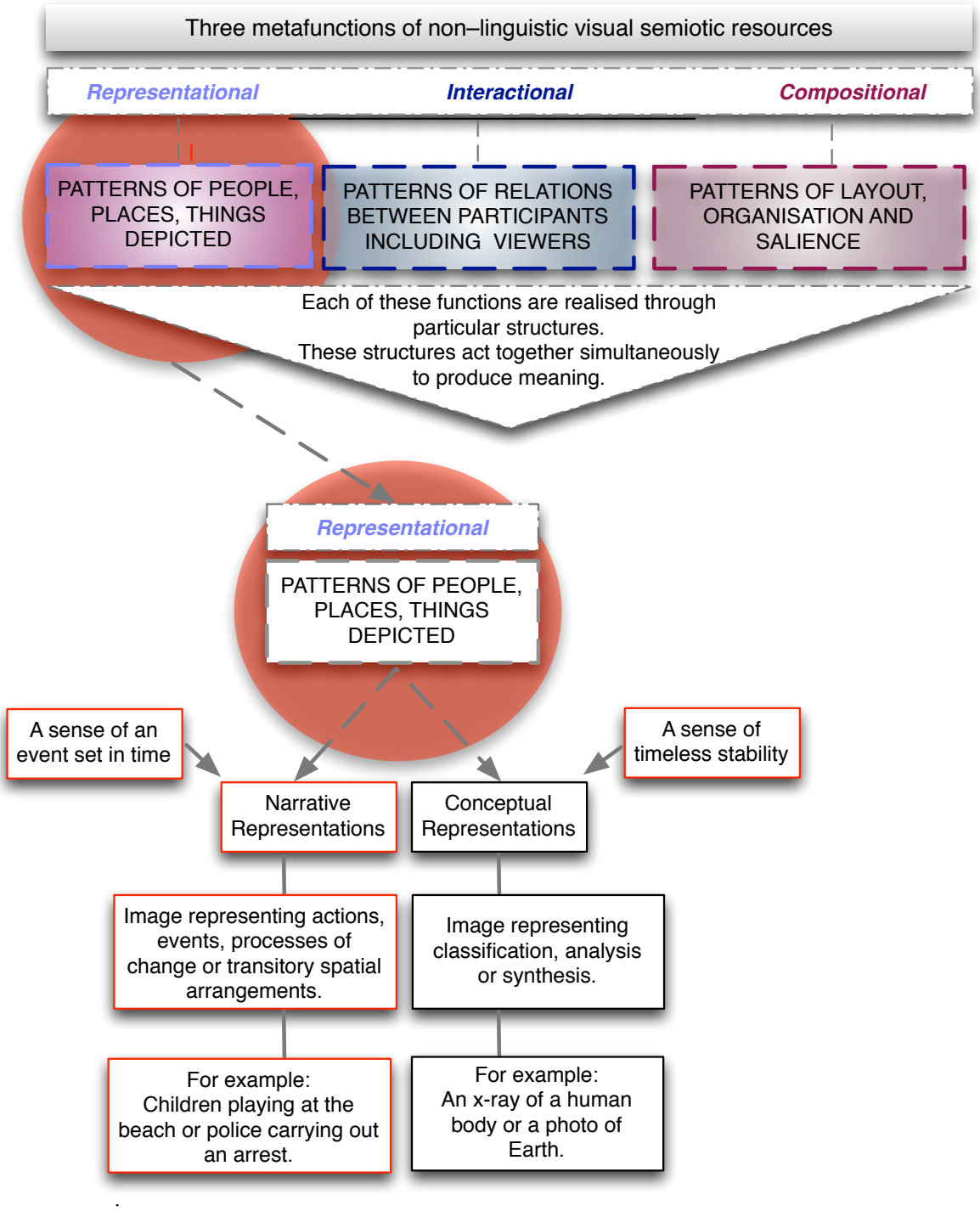


FIGURE 2.7: Representational function of an image

Examples of narrative representations may include photographs showing a snapshot of an event such as playing on the beach or a world news event. Figure 2.8 depicts one of narrative representations in the 2010 NAPLAN writing prompt, where an individual is shown reconstructing a torn up photograph (ACARA 2010).

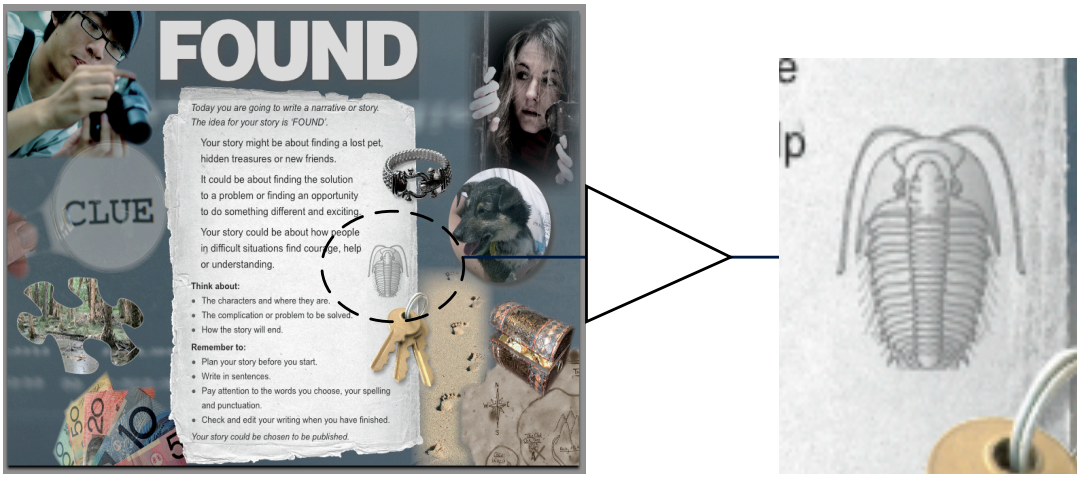
Conceptual representations present design patterns involved with classification processes. Non-linguistic visual resources using these patterns of representation serve to present participants or objects that connect in a taxonomy or strata structure. Images that represent conceptual patterns are explained as being more stable and timeless representations of purpose, structure or meaning. Examples of conceptual representations may include an x–ray of a human body, a photograph of an Emperor Penguin or, as illustrated in Figure 2.9, a sketch of a fossil. These types of visual representations realise a sense of timelessness and stability.

FIGURE 2.8: Narrative representation in the 2010 NAPLAN prompt

The contrast between reading narrative and conceptual patterns are important to consider because different types of representations shape the nature of what is evoked. Thus, conceptual representations are rarely used in the narrative writing assessment prompts; rather images in the writing prompts represent story–like actions and events. This requires a specific way for looking dependent on the social purpose of the picture and the task. For example, a reader would look for different aspects when viewing a penguin for composing an information report than for writing a story about this animal. Furthermore, in relation to this study, while it is generally accepted that narrative is characterized by time, cause and effect, how and which story aspects are depicted on a

single A4 sized page was investigated. Considering students need to look for story aspects involving actions and complications in this way for large–scale narrative writing assessment prompts, I explored which aspects of story were depicted in the prompts, how the temporal nature of narrative was shown, and how students identified these potential meanings.

The most significant differentiating factor between narrative and conceptual representations of meaning is the use of vectors. In non-linguistic visual narratives, vectors represent connections between participants in an image (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006, p 42). Jewitt (2009) refers to vectors as 'visual verbs' projecting associations in an image. This visual tool is used in non-linguistic visual resources to link ideas construed in narrative events by asking the same questions as those asked in linguistic narratives such as: What is going on? Who or what is involved? Is there anyone or thing involved?' and, Are there any extra details? (Derewianka 2011). Vectors are action focused rather than entity focused and play an important role in representing real time in single frame visual narratives.



Sketch of a fossil as an example of a conceptual drawing in a narrative writing prompt

FIGURE 2.9: Conceptual representation in the 2009 NAPLAN writing prompt

Narrative representations always have at least one vector within their picture because they transfer "someone or something to or for another" (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006, p 59). While the same linguistic probes can be used to question what is happening in pictures enabling us to identify participants, processes and circumstances, these relations are enabled through invisible connective lines, connections through objects, body parts, or gazes within an image. It seems that the identification of vectors is

important in realizing actions and connections in a story, thus was considered when analysing students' responses to narrative pictures.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) identify six different ways that vectors facilitate meanings within narrative patterns of representation.

> *Action Process*: A narrative process involving interpersonal connections and actions in an image such as a person taking a photo.
> *Reaction Process:* A narrative process involving reactions to actions with and without all participants visible in the frame.
> *Speech and Mental Process:* A narrative process whereby a character's words are made viewable to the sign-reader through a speech bubble and a character's mental processes are illustrated through the use of a thought bubble such as those used in cartoons.
> *Geometric Symbolism:* A conceptual representation that does not use participants, rather geometric symbols are used to express meaning in an image such as arrows, shapes and abstract signs.
> *Circumstances:* Details that add to the location such as trees, grass and flowers in a setting, or are means to an action such as a camera used to take a photograph by a participant.
> *Conversion Process:* A narrative process involving a participant is involved in a transactional process, which is viewed and responded to by a third participant.

The above categories are represented in varying degrees in the visual writing assessment prompts selected for this study. The explanation of these processes was applied when I developed the *analytical framework* for interpreting the ways in which the visual narratives in the selected writing assessment prompts represented these story aspects (Appendix A). The following discussion further elaborates these categories.

Action and reactional processes: Representing happenings in an image

What is going on and who is involved in a visual narrative can involve action and reactional processes. These processes can show all the characters that are taking part in the event and, as such are described as transactional in nature. However actions and reactions in visual narrative might only depict some of the participants involved and are said to be non–transactional.

In narrative representations that involve action processes, participants in an image play the role of either *actors* or *goals.* What distinguishes the different roles is their relationship with the vector in the image. Participants either start an action (playing the role of actor) or receive an action (being the goal). These transactions are said to take place between the participants linked by vectors. That is, a means of invisible connections linking what is being depicted and what is going on in a picture. Where a participant starts an action, they send out the vector to someone or something that will receive the action. In other words, goals are the participants 'at whom the vector is directed' (Jewitt & Oyama 2001, p143). As illustrated in Figure 2.10, when an actor sends out a vector and the goal receives the message via the vector, a transaction takes place. Whether the vector is sent as a line, gesture, object or body part, the vector depicts events that occur in the narrative. These types of processes are called transactional active processes because both the participant sending the message and the goal receiving the message are visible in the picture.

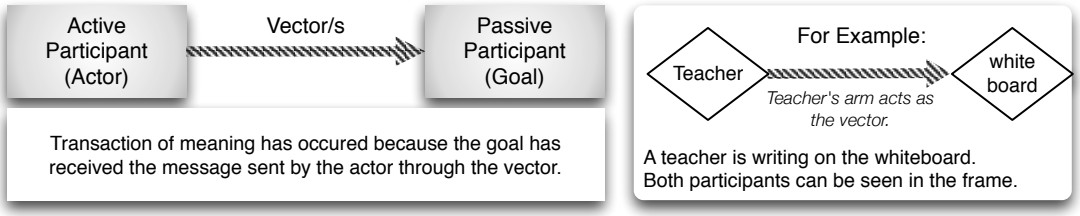


FIGURE 2.10: Transactional narrative representation - active process

However, not all narrative representations involve a 'sent and received' transactional process. As illustrated in Figure 2.11, narrative representations can also be active but 'non–transactional.' In these types of representations, the actor sends out an action through a vector but there is no goal to receive the message at all. At these times, a transaction has occurred but not all participants can be seen in the picture.

FIGURE 2.11: Non–transactional narrative representation - active process

Non–transactional representations can also be passive processes rather than active action processes. This is because only the vector and the goal are visible. Illustrated in Figure 2.12, in these types of images, something is seen to be happening (the event) but who or what is making it happen is not visible to the viewer. The viewer has to supply the 'actor' as the picture does not show it. Painter and Martin (2012) argue this type of vector places the viewer in the position of either viewing the event along with the character or as the character.

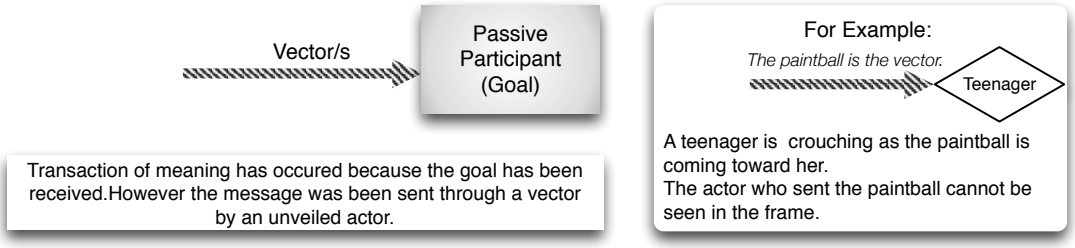


FIGURE 2.12. Non–transactional narrative representation - passive process

An understanding of transactional and non–transactional action processes allowed me to identify the types of narrative action processes that writing assessment prompts depict. Figure 2.13 illustrates on example of the depiction of passive action processes that are non–transactional. Examples of this type of process are used to depict a glass of spilt milk, spilt paint and a broken moneybox. In these images, the narrative representations are passive non–transactional processes because who is involved (actors) and what is causing the action (vectors) are not shown in the picture. Another example of a passive non–transactional process in this same prompt is evident in the moonscape. In this photograph, the rubbish (phenomenon) is depicted but the producers of the rubbish inhabiting the Earth in the distance (actors) thus not all actors are shown and need to be implied.

These types of non–transactional action processes require viewers to infer complications and envisage actors as contributors to the event shown. As Figure 2.13 illustrates, a number of different action processes used in narrative prompts this way. The NAPLAN prompts, such as those in the previous figures, offer multiple types of action processes requiring more complex interpretations that might require more time and skills to problem out than the earlier BST prompts depicting one narrative.

FIGURE 2.13: Various non–transactional passive action processes

In addition to action processes, visual narratives can depict reactional processes. These types of processes differ from action processes, as they specifically involve "creatures with visible eyes that have distinct pupils and [are] capable of facial expression" (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p 67). While reactional processes work in similar ways to action processes, participants' roles are labelled differently. The actors are referred to as *reactors* as they are reacting to something. The goals are referred to as *phenomena* (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006).

Reactional processes, like action processes, can also be transactional or non–transactional. Reactional processes that show both the reactor and the phenomena are said to be transactional. These types of processes show eye contact from a reactor reaching the phenomenon.

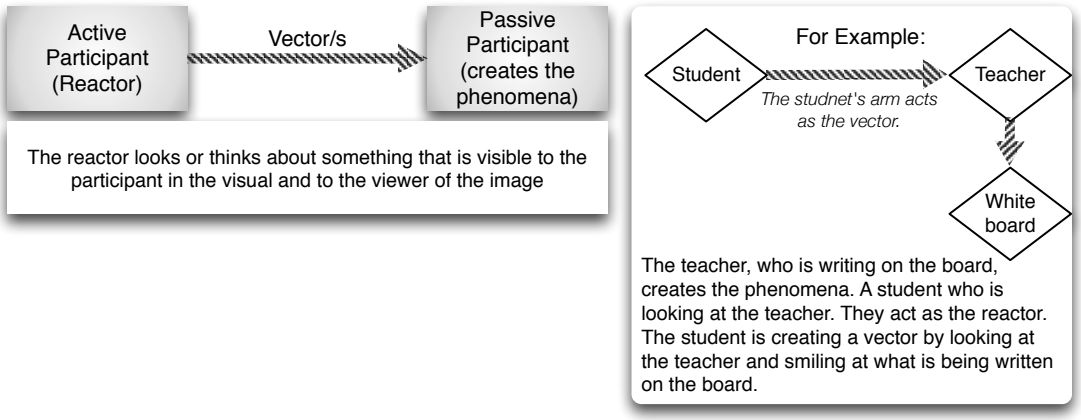


FIGURE 2.14: Transactional narrative representation – reactional process

Figure 2.14 illustrates this type of process involving a living participant. The sign–reader is able to see a student in the picture (*reactor)* looking at the teacher who is writing on the whiteboard (*phenomenon)*. In this example, the student's sight of view in the picture acts as the vector.

Examples depicting these types of processes are also evident in the writing assessment prompts. One prompt depicting these types of processes is shown in Figure 2.15. Various pictures within this text show transactional reactive processes. These processes have been highlighted in the picture using dashed oval shapes. The first of these examples is used where an adult (reactor) is looking (vector) at a building demolition (goal). This reactional process is transactional because all those involved in the narrative representation are viewable in the text. Similarly, a reactional process that transacts is depicted where the girl (reactor) is looking (vector) at an event occurring on her computer (goal). Here a viewer is provided with the setting, the problem, the characters involved and their reaction to the problem.

FIGURE 2.15: Transactional narrative representation – reactional processes

In other instances, as illustrated Figure 2.16, participants within a picture can be shown to be thinking or looking at 'something' that is not visible to the sign-reader. These types of representations are referred to as non–transactional reactional processes because viewers are required to imagine what the *reactor* in the picture is looking at. These types of processes are also illustrated in Figure 2.15.

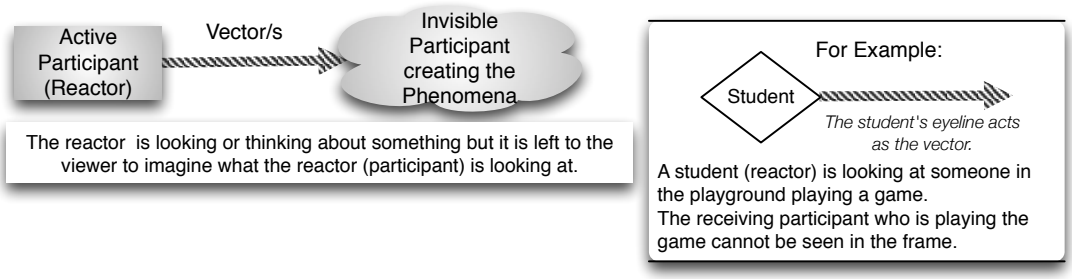


FIGURE 2.16: Reactional narrative processes: Non–transactional

Non–transactional reactional processes are deployed in various NAPLAN prompts with examples from the prompt 'Found' used to illustrate these types in Figure 2.17. As the arrows indicate, *reactors* are looking at something that is not visible to the sign–reader, thus no transaction has occurred in the reactional process. In the example of a teenager (reactor) looking to the left, the phenomenon is not visible to the sign-reader, thus the reaction is non–transactional. Similarly, in the instance depicting a teenage boy and in another example of a dog, the reactors are sending out a vector through a gaze, but the phenomena they are looking towards is not visible to the sign–reader.

FIGURE 2.17: Reactional narrative processes: Non–transactional

Thus connections between participants in narrative pictures can be transactional or non–transactional, active or passive and involve one or a number of participants. Examples of these types of processes can be identified across standardised BST and the NAPLAN writing assessment prompts. In some cases, as highlighted in the previous examples, various transactional, non–transactional active and reactional processes can be depicted in a single text. The use of multiple types of narrative processes may add to the complexity of interpreting meaning potentials than prompts depicting one narrative process.

Speech and mental processes

In Kress and Van Leeuwen's visual framework (2006), participants' speech or thoughts can be represented using speech or thought bubbles. These processes are more commonly found in comic strips, or in textbooks and onscreen environments. As illustrated in Figures 2.18 and 2.19, these thoughts and speech are connected with participants through a defined shape acting as a vector.

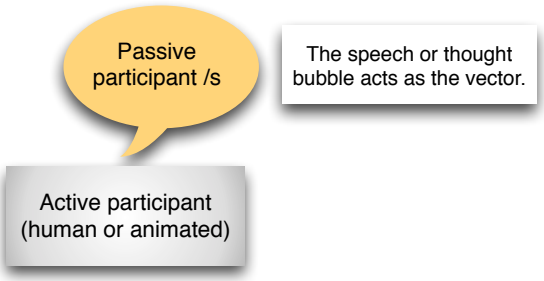


FIGURE 2.18: Speech and mental processes

Figure 2.19 demonstrates the use of a mental process to realise an action. In the prompt 'Rosie' the cartoon drawing illustrates a monster thinking about or imagining an event. Rosie's thought is illustrated above her and is connected to her through the use of a thought bubble. Rosie creates a vector as she looks up to her imagined event, which is represented in a thought bubble. The characters within the thought bubble are passive participants as they are not involved with the 'real' representation of the character Rosie in the main frame.

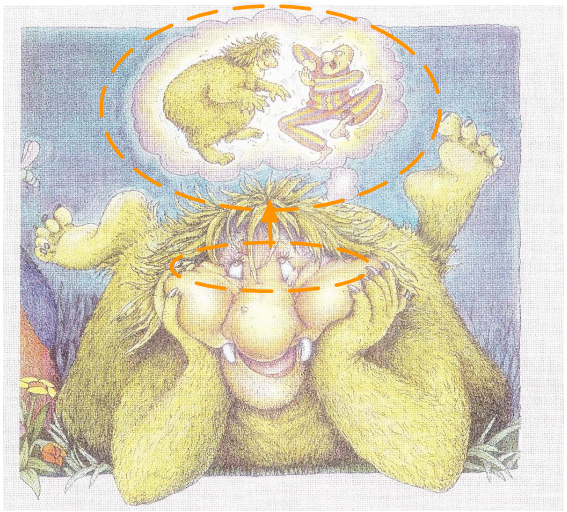


FIGURE 2.19: A mental process depicted in the 2000 BST writing prompt

Geometric symbolism

Mathematical symbols and icons are not generally involved in narrative representations. These types of signs, also referred to as geometric symbols, are said to be more common in conceptual representations. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) draw on Dance's (1967) earlier communication model to explain images that use patterns in abstract ways. These types of images do not include participants but rather vectors such as arrows, lines and symbols. These vectors are used in a variety of ways to direct viewers and realise varying levels of importance. Because such symbols are not narrative representations and are more commonly included in informative texts, they are minimally represented in the writing prompts within this study and therefore only briefly mentioned here. However, an example of the use of geometric symbolism is demonstrated the writing assessment prompt 'The Ancient Box' (DET 2004). As shown in Figure 2.16, in this instance, patterns using arrows and circles, icons and other logophonetic shapes suggest an ancient script. These visual components contribute to representational meaning by placing the box in the ancient world. While in this instance the symbols are on the material body of the object, they could be classified as circumstantial contributing to the age and setting of the main object depicted in the prompt.

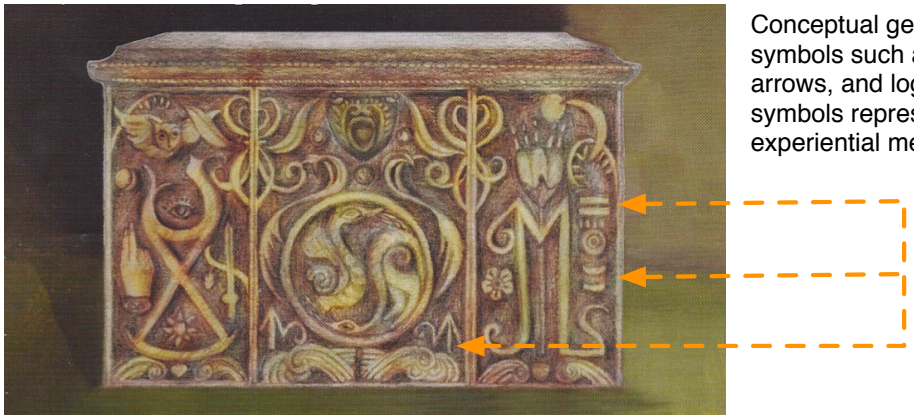


FIGURE: 2.20: Geometric symbols depicted in the 2004 BST prompt

Circumstances

Extra details in narrative pictures that add context without adding to the narrative are referred to as *circumstances* (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Unsworth & Cleirigh 2009). Circumstantial components in a picture are said to contribute to the locations of things and to assist in situating participants in a location or setting. Participants share the same space in the picture as circumstantial components and can be, but are not always, connected by vectors. For example, in Figure 2.15, Rosie the night fright monster is located in the same text with grass, rocks, ground, sky and flora. These circumstantial components contribute to the construal of a natural or realistic setting.

In addition to locative circumstances, components in a picture may act as a 'means' with less clearly defined vectors (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006). For example, in a picture in which the main participant is using a knife to cut a piece of fruit, the knife may be considered a circumstance of 'means'. Examples of a circumstance of means are evidenced in the writing assessment prompts. One example is demonstrated in Figure 2.21, where the camera is being used to take a photo. Here the camera acts as a circumstance of 'means'. As these examples indicate, a circumstance of means or location are not narrative processes but can be identified within narrative representations.

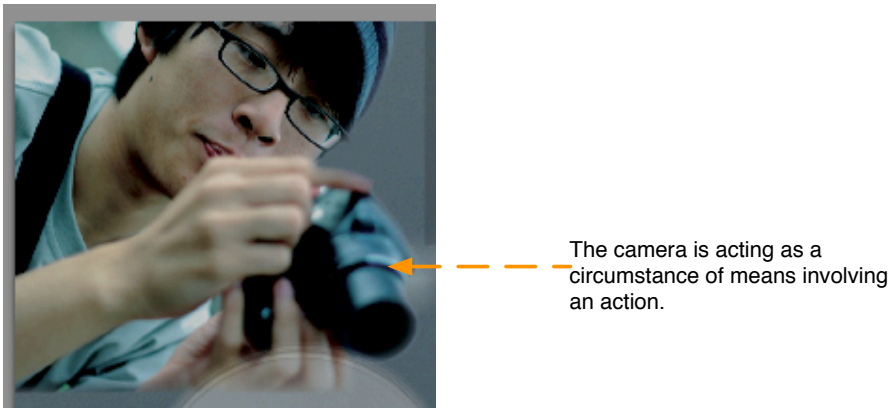


FIGURE 2.21: Example of 'means of the circumstance' in the 2008 NAPLAN Writing Prompt

The third type of circumstance (accompaniment) does not need vectors to support connections. Connections between the participants and parts that compose the identified participant are an accessory not involved in the action. An example of this type of circumstance is a person standing next to a desk. Here the association between the person and the object is taken for granted as 'known' and no vectors are used to enhance the visual connection.

Conversion processes

Another type of process involves a chain of transactional processes. This type of relationship is called a *conversion process* (Watson & Hill 1980 cited Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006). This process is not usually referred to as a narrative process, and is more commonly used when representing factual processes such as a scientific process because elements within the process change in some way. For example, the heating of water until it turns to steam is a conversion process. However, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) use this process to explain the involvement of human interactions in narratives as a natural process of change. As illustrated in Fig 2.22, the process involves more than two participants. One character (the active participant) is involved in an action, another character reacts to this action and the third character is involved by reacting to the second character's transaction.

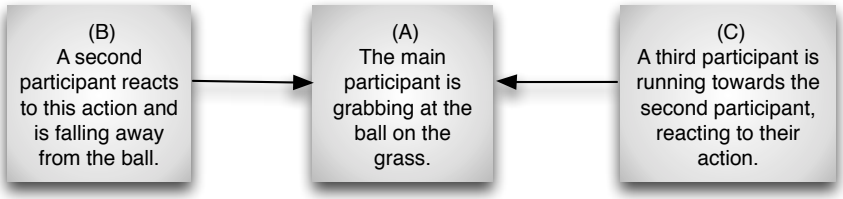


FIGURE 2.22: The conversion process

Generally the conversion process involves a different emotional or physical response to the second character's reaction. While this type of narrative process was only found once in the selected writing prompts used in this study in the writing prompt 'Rosie (DET 2000), an example of a conversion process is shown in Figure 2.23.

The active main participant (A) is grabbing at a ball on the grass. The second participant (B) reacts to the character and is falling away from the ball. The third participant (C) involved is running towards participant (B) reacting to the second participant's action (B). These types of processes suggest a sequence of events to be narrated.

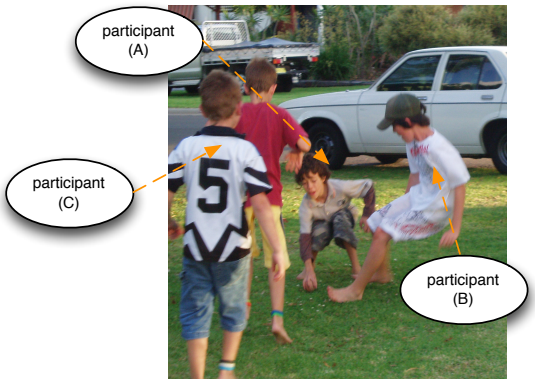


FIGURE 2.23: An example of a conversion process involving human interaction

2.2.2. The interactional metafunction

The interactional metafunction recognises that a relationship exists between the world shown in an image and the viewer. This interaction or connection is possible because both the producer and the viewer of image have a mutual understanding of the 'visual codes' or 'visual resources' used to create and read image. The interactional metafunction is concerned with:

- The relations between participants in an image
- The relations between the viewed and the viewer and,
- The relations between the sign-maker and the sign-reader.

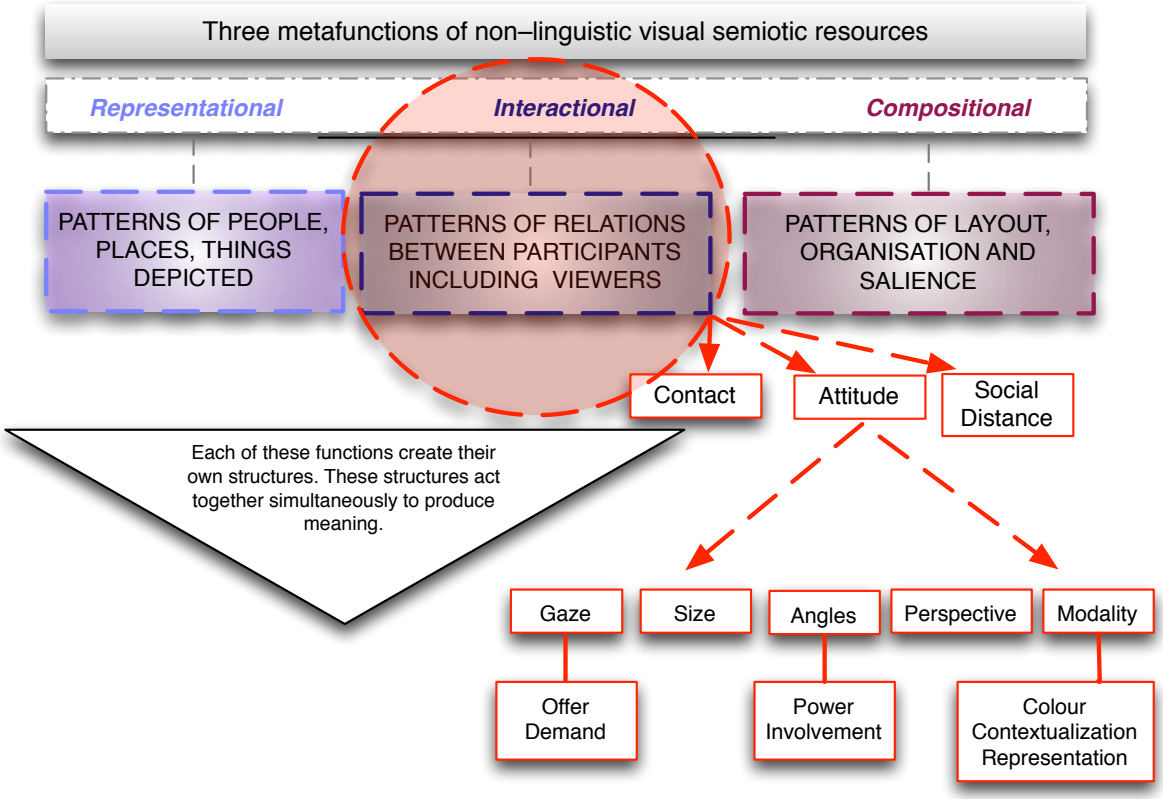


FIGURE 2.24: The interactional metafunction

As illustrated in Figure 2.24, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) explain that patterns of interaction are enacted through three categories being contact, social distance and attitude. These categories were useful when examining visual narratives in the writing prompts because they provided a way to identify how the image enacted feelings, emotions and mood.

It is also understood that interpersonal relations in non–linguistic visual resources dealing with contact, social distance and attitude can be enacted in varying degrees (Painter & Martin 2012). These changing interactions are listed below followed by a detailed explanation. The varying degrees of contact, attitude and social relations enacted were considered because of the different:

- *Demands* or offers that a picture requires of the viewer
- *Personal connections* between the viewer and the events taking place either directly or through the characters represented
- *Power relations* through the affordance of framing, positioning proximity, orientation and angles in the image.

These variances were considered when designing the *conceptual framework* in order to record and compare the different ways interactional meaning was enacted in an across the writing prompts. These categories were also considered when interpreting students' responses to visual writing prompts in terms of the impact varying degrees of contact, social distance and attitudes enacted play on the ideas students generate and how they work these into their composition.

Contact is concerned with the relations evoked in an image being the way characters are involved with each other in an image and with the sign-reader. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) explain that these relations either 'demand' something from viewers in an expectation of a response from them or 'offer' something to them, which can then be accepted or rejected. The realisation of offers and demand is determined by the degree of eye contact with the character. The more direct the eye contact, the stronger the demand and, the closer or more intimate the connection. Conversely, the less eye contact, the less connection and the greater the emotional detachment with who and what is going on in the picture. Social semiotics comes into play particularly in terms of how connections are made and what they mean in different social practices. For example a smile may seem polite and offer affinity between characters yet demand a different social relation in other contexts. Irrespective of how the connection is interpreted, these varying degrees of contacts are made through eye contact (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Goodwin 2001).

Figure 2.25 illustrates how image evokes degrees of contact that offer and demand responses from viewers. The most demanding contact is realised through a direct gaze between the participants in Rosie's daydream. Other vectors in the way of gestures such as pointing or a beckoning hand also evoke a strong degree of interpersonal contact.

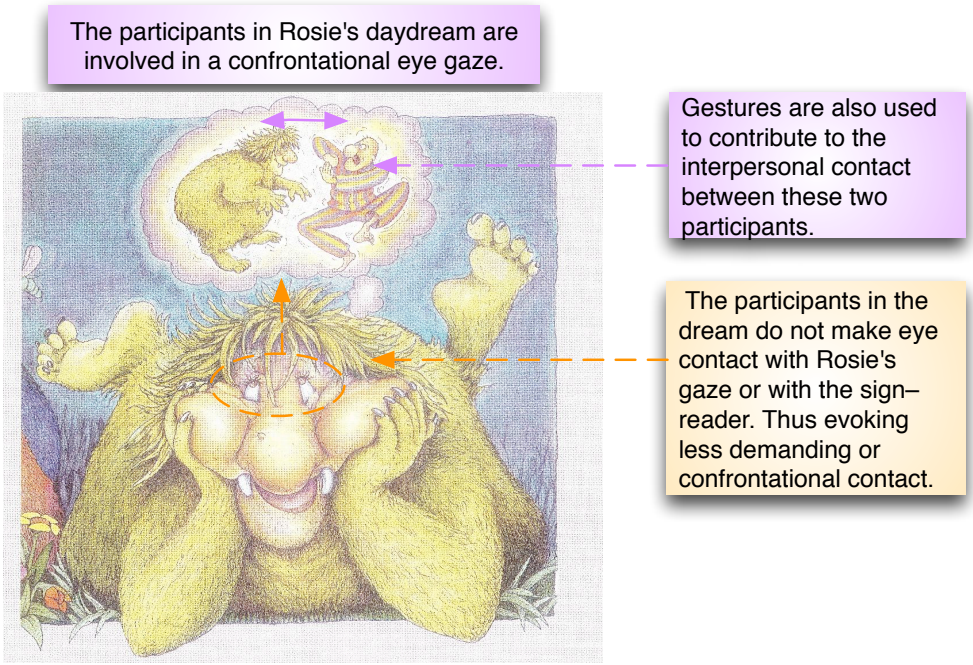


FIGURE 2.25: Offers and demands through eye contact in the 2000 BST writing prompt

The glance Rosie projects to her dream offers the viewer the opportunity to connect with what is going on in the thought bubble. This type of contact does not use direct eye contact or use gestures to connect with viewers. Instead the sign–reader takes on the role of an invisible onlooker where they view the narrative that is taking place but are not actively involved (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006).

It is also argued that visual narrative representations do more than make offers or demands through eye contact. Painter (2012) explains that sign–readers can be positioned to look from different points of view to evoke degrees of contact. The degrees of position afforded to pictures in this way are described as the *process of focalisation.* Focalisation considers whose eyes the sign–readers are looking through to view the picture (Painter 2012). It is argued that during the focalisation process, types of viewing can be categorised as:

- Unmediated contact
- Mediated contact through the eyes of the character, or
- Looking with the character.

Unmediated contact is one that is explained as the default option offering no additional realisation (Painter; Martin & Unsworth 2013). This type of contact is also described as

‘unmediated focalisation.’ An example of this type of contact is shown in Figure 2.26. This example shows an ancient box without mediation of or by a character.

FIGURE 2.26: Unmediated focalisation in the 2004 BST writing prompt

In mediated focalisation, sign–readers can view a picture through the eyes of the character. An example of this type of focalisation is demonstrated in the NAPLAN writing prompt ‘What a Mess!’ (ACARA 2010) shown in Figure 2.27. In this example, the picture represents hands in a way that suggests they belong to the viewer. Positioning the viewer this way places the sign–reader as the character undertaking the action. These types of representations evoke a stronger degree of contact between the sign–reader and the event that is taking place in the picture.

FIGURE 2.27: Mediated as the character in the 2010 NAPLAN writing prompt

Positioning a sign–reader to look along with or through a character’s eyes, also evokes mediation. Painter (2012) explains this form of focalisation, as shown in Figure 2.28, as if the sign–reader is looking over the shoulder of the character into the event that is taking place in the picture.

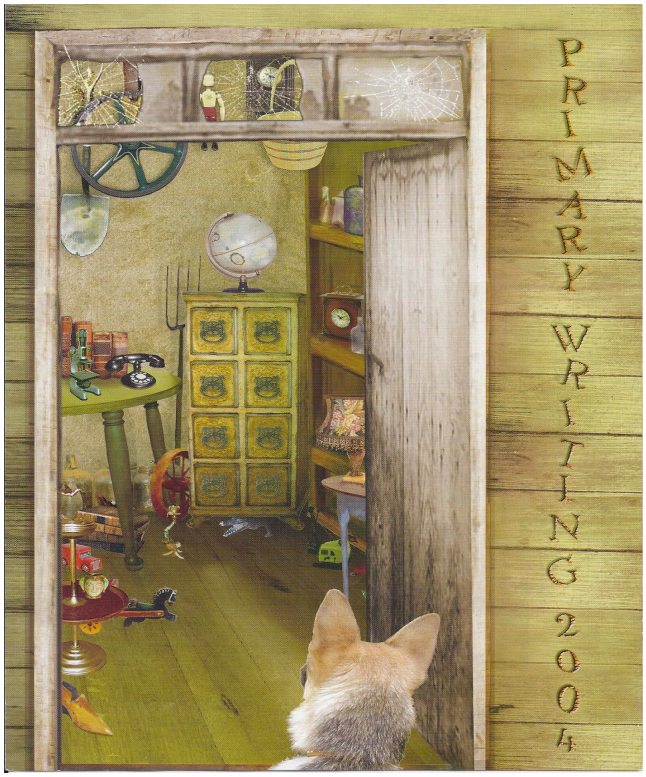


FIGURE 2.28: Mediated through the character in 2004 BST writing prompt

Social distance

Different degrees of interactions are evoked by how close or far apart characters in an image are spaced, and how close the viewer is to what is going on in the image (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006). That is, the closer the sign–reader is to the participant in the picture, the more intimate the interaction and engagement is said to be. Conversely, the further away the participant appears from the viewer and the smaller the participants are within the frame of the composition, the less intimate the engagement between them and the sign–reader. Painter, Martin and Unsworth (2012) argue that social distance (referred to as proximity) is commonly used to enact degrees of intimacy in visual narratives and this visual device is used frequently in the selected writing assessment prompts. One example of the connections created by social distance can be seen in the prompt 'What a Mess!' (ACARA 2010). As demonstrated in Figure 2.29, the scene depicted on the left from the 'What a Mess!' prompt, positions the sign–reader far away from the event. This social distance enacts less social interaction than that in the close–up position between the girl and sign-reader in the photograph on the right the NAPLAN writing assessment prompt 'Found'.

FIGURE 2.29: Enacting degrees of social distance and intimacy using distance in prompts

Attitude

Elements within an image such as perspective, contrast and shading are used in degrees to flag attitudes in and about an image. The use of perspective can articulate different feelings about the happenings in the visual narrative (Painter, Martin & Unsworth 2012; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006). That is, pictures that allow sign–readers to see all that there is to see, such as in the photograph on the left in Figure 2.29, tend to be more objective because they enable sign–readers to select their own viewpoint. Comparatively, pictures that restrict the sign–readers' view tend to be more subjective as they only allow the sign-reader a particular viewpoint preselected by the sign–maker. Another example demonstrating the different interpersonal relations afforded by perspective is shown in Figure 2.30. In these instances different perspectives used by sign–makers realise varying degrees of subjectivity.

FIGURE 2.30: Enacting interpersonal relations afforded by perspective in prompts

That is, the photograph on the left in Figure 2.30 shows a wide view and direct perspective to the sign–reader. This perspective provides most of what is available in the bedroom scene. In contrast, the photograph on the left provide only part of all there is to see and as such present a biased or pre-determined attitude for the viewer to accept.

Closely aligned to the element of perspective is the use of position and angles. Horizontal and vertical angles are explained in the literature as projecting degrees of *involvement* between the happenings in the picture and the sign–reader (Callow 2013; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Painter; Martin & Unsworth 2011). Although social meanings in regards to distance and position vary, some generalisations about the degrees of *involvement* between characters and viewers can be drawn on when considering horizontal angles in pictures. As illustrated in Figure 2.31, frontal and more obtuse angles on the horizontal plane are said to offer a closer involvement with the visual narrative because they allow the viewer more direct eye contact with what is happening and who is involved. Conversely, by positioning viewers on a more oblique horizontal line, their involvement with the participants and happenings in the non–linguistic visual narrative decreases. For example, in Figure 2.31, the direct horizontal position with the teenage boy, proximity and direct eye contact demands close interactional relations with this character. However, other photographs in the same prompt using more oblique or acute angles on the horizontal plane suggest that the viewer is an outsider looking into a world that they are not actively involved because they require a less committal role from the viewer.

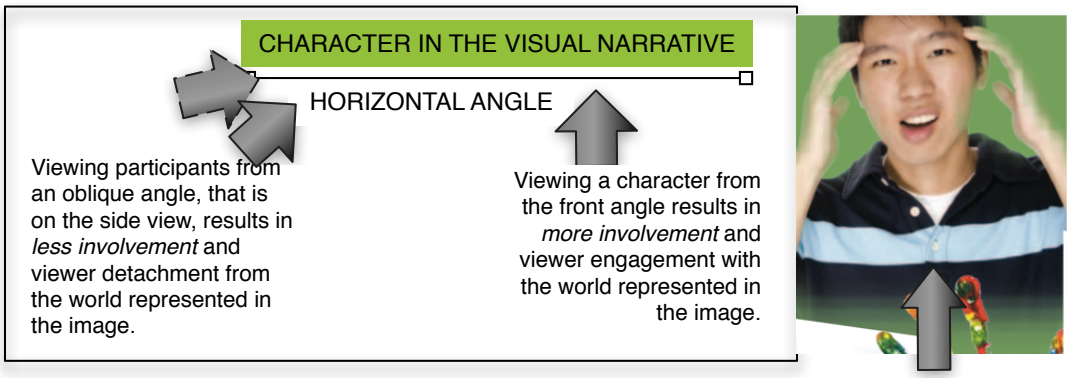


FIGURE 2.31: Creating degrees of involvement using horizontal angles

Vertical angles also enable particular social interactions between the viewer and the picture. Whereas angles on the horizontal plane enact degrees of involvement, it is

argued that angles on the vertical plane enact degrees of *power relationships* between the participant and viewer. Generally in western cultures, viewers are said to have power over an object when they are looking down onto the participants in the picture offering greater power status to the viewers. Alternatively, as illustrated in Figure 2.32, participants and happenings in a picture project supremacy over viewers if they are positioned above sign–readers' eye line (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006). As the example of the 2008 writing prompt, 'The Box' illustrates, placing the viewer in a vertical position looking down onto the box infers a position of power over the object.

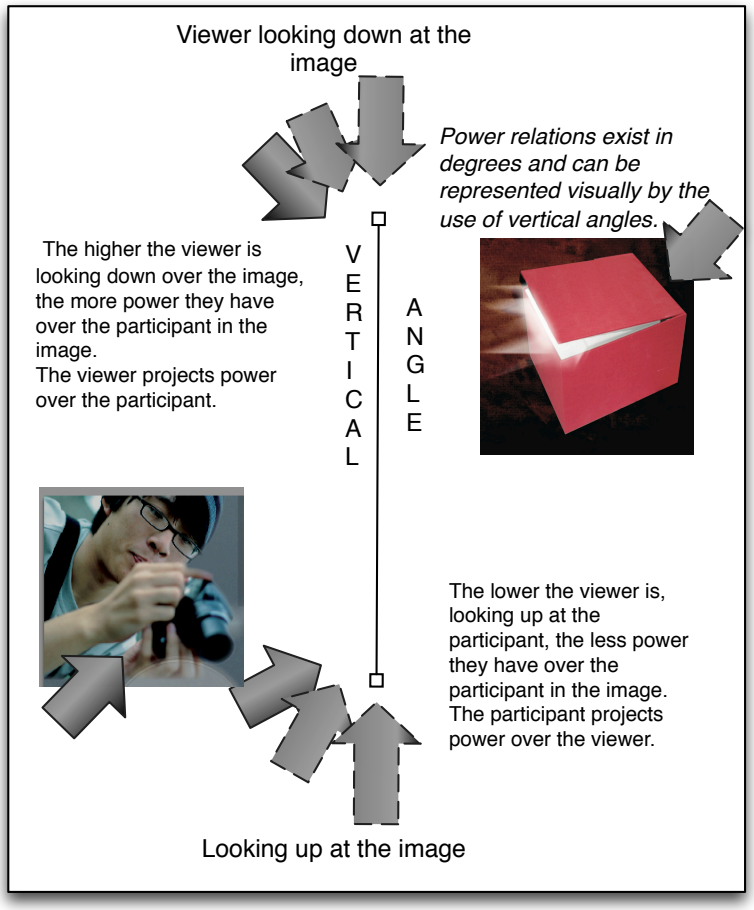


FIGURE 2.32: Creating degrees of power using vertical angles

Elements dealing with position, perspective, contact and distance evoke varying degrees of connections with who and what is going on in the visual narrative. Thus, the way these elements are used in a writing assessment prompt may evoke varying degrees of emotional connections with the representations made available. Accordingly, much can also be said about the varying interpretations from the types of angles and perspectives used considering the diversity of students required to compose from the ideas generated using the visual writing prompts. A visual invitation or demand, while evoking different

responses is no disadvantage, however when connotative narratives enacting themes and inner struggles are highly valued in writing assessment marking criteria, then the type of images presented as a stimulus in writing assessments play an important role in the types of stories generated.

Modality cues: Abstraction and believability

Images depict varying degrees of reality or believability, which act as modality cues for viewers. The literature identifies a number of visual elements that portray the natural world and thus evoking degrees of believability in the participants, settings and events (Gibson 1986; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Painter 2012; Williams 2007). These visual elements include:

Contextualisation: The placement of participants in a setting articulates a greater degree of naturalism, believability and authenticity than those decontextualised from a setting or location.

Depth: Deeper perspective and overlapping of participants imitates real environments. Conversely, flatter shapes with less depth tend to represent unreal objects or participants.

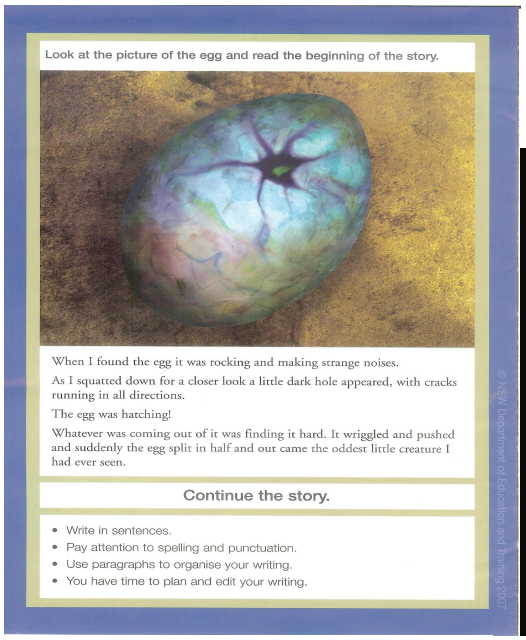
Colour: Degrees of saturation, modulation and differentiation in colour assists sign-makers to enact realness in an image.

Illumination and tone: Shading, shadow and variation in light represent more realness in images. Lack of reflection, shadow, tones and receding corners suggests less realness in an object.

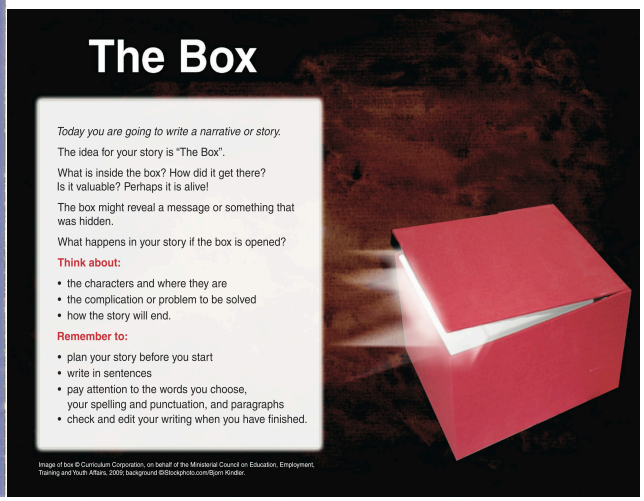
Brightness: Contrasts and degrees of brightness represent real experiences and objects. Evidence of a light source also depicts greater realism.

Contextualising participants and objects in realistic settings act to portray a greater degree of believability or realness in narrative representation. However, the use of medium can also influence the degrees of believability about what is shown. For example, the use of the fish eye lens is one technique used to widen a sign–reader's view, making natural events appear less real or hyper–real (Gomrich 1982 cited Machin 2007). On the other hand, exaggeration of aspects can be used to show abstract events in a more concrete and realistic way. The use of instruments that magnify images is another way medium evokes degrees of naturalism. For example, magnification can show microscopic cell division or other scientific events, normally invisible to the naked eye, thus making abstract images more concrete and, in a sense more 'real' as they can be seen rather than just imagined.

The use of colour is said to evoke varying degrees of ‘realness’ by creating particular moods or feelings about a setting. Painter (2012) explains that colour aspects can be used to evoke an atmosphere or ambience in an image. Because ambience is argued to contribute to how viewers ‘feel’ about the happenings taking place, ambient settings may evoke particular degrees of realness or believability about the visual narrative being represented. Use of brightness, illumination and shadow are said to all contribute to creating ambience in a setting. The construction of ambience can be explored by comparing the two images in past writing assessment prompts illustrated in Figure 2.33. Both of these examples depict imaginary events. However, varying degrees of colour elements including tone evoke differing degrees of believability about what is happening in the pictures. That is, increased colour variation in the egg prompt, along with the use of shadow suggests a greater degree of realism and time passing than that evoked by the box prompt. In contrast, the illuminated green speck provides a degree of questionability about the realness of the object inside the egg. In the latter, limited colour variation of the box object and the background suggest hyper-realness or an abstraction from reality. Illumination of the light also suggests an unreal object or illusory happening might be taking place inside the box.



BST Writing Prompt
'The Egg' (DET 2007).



NAPLAN Writing Prompt
'The Box' (ACARA 2009)

FIGURE 2.33: Degrees of believability and realness

Variations in ambience such as those depicted in the visual writing assessment prompts each year may evoke differing degrees of interpersonal connection with the characters

and events in the picture. In turn, degrees of realism depicted in the picture may shape the type of story and sub genres that students subsequently compose.

Abstraction is explained in varying ways across theory (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Kreuter 2009; Mitchell 2005; Painter et al. 2013; Wang & Hsu 2007). Discussions centre on the use of abstraction to depict degrees of realness or simplification of what is depicted. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) discuss how degrees of abstraction portrayed in a picture by the use of depth, colour saturation and tone variation can evoke different replications of the natural world. The degrees afforded by these elements are argued to act as modality cues, which contribute to the realness of the event and characters represented in the picture. That is, by decreasing (lowering modality) by reducing degrees of medium, depth, detail, and colour tone variation, the modality is lowered, abstracting the contents from a replication of the natural world. Conversely, increasing the degree of use afforded by these visual elements in pictures increases the modality. By increasing modality and the variances in and amongst these elements, the more closely the contents replicate the natural world thus reducing the abstraction.

Kreuter (2009) discusses abstraction in terms of the motivated sign in evoking a sense of rationality, which he calls logos–driven image. These types of visual representations are intended to represent 'truth' with unquestionable scientific authority and objective knowledge that such as x–rays, maps or remote sensing imaging. Thus, unlike an image that evokes a pathos-driven response, logos-driven images are assumed to appeal to a viewer's sense of rationality, distancing or 'abstracting' them from emotional connections. However, Kreuter (2009) challenges claims that logos–driven images represent unquestionable truth, arguing that viewers still ascribe meaning to image, which can be subjective, depending on a sign–reader's knowledge about the content, their cultural disposition and personal assumptions.

Abstraction is also discussed in terms of degrees of reducing detail to simplify representations. Wang and Hsu (2007) explain the use of abstraction as a 'reduction method.' The reduction of colour tones, simplification of shapes, angles and line pathways is said to reduce the complexity of objects and simplify representation. Yet, they also argue that removing too much detail can result in an image becoming unrecognisable to the viewer. Less iconic and highly simplified images may therefore be more complex and difficult to interpret for example, while stick figures are generally identified as abstract representations of people, a simplified logo representing an

uncommon object may not be as easily interpreted. Similarly simplified symbols can be culturally bound, having different meanings in different cultures or situations. For instance, the exclamation mark can be used as a punctuation mark in writing to express strong feelings but can also be used as a traffic warning sign of a possible driving hazard.

Minimalising detail in an image is also identified as an element used to represent less 'naturalistic' life–imitating narratives. Painter, Martin and Unsworth (2013) discuss the use of minimalism in narrative picture books for evoking degrees of abstraction. In their study on narrative picture books, they found minimalist character representations dominated narrative picture books for younger readers and more naturalistic photographic–like character representations dominated picture books for older readers. The greater use of minimalist universal representations by sign–makers for younger readers seems to assume that less representation is easier to interpret, and that interpreting naturalistic detailed images is a more complex process reserved for older viewers. The varying use of naturalistic pictures suggests that sign–makers identify age as a factor in how abstraction is interpreted. As illustrated in Figure 2.32, writing assessment prompts portray differing degrees of simplification each year, evoking differing degrees of realness may impact the subgenre students use to compose. This being the case, the effectiveness of a visual prompt using varying degrees of abstraction in a picture presented to students from year three to year nine is brought into question.

Degrees of reduction were flagged in the prompt analysis as a factor influencing what is interpreted from visual prompts. I attended to these degrees using a cline approach in the *analytical framework,* which is detailed in chapter three.

Abstracting from experience

Abstraction can also be explained in terms of scales dealing with production and reception of image. Arnheim (1969) explains these scales as the *Image Scale* and the *Experience Scale. The Image Scale* requires sign–readers to discover "what factors contribute to the new context and why their contribution produces an effect" (Arnheim 1969, p 192). Examples of this type of abstraction could be a picture of a generic car or an icon such as the Olympic symbol. The Image Scale is similar to Wang and Hsu's (2007) reduction method.

The *Experience Scale* deals with interpreting meaning from images by considering viewers' experiences as an influence on what is seen as abstract. From this premise, visual image that can be related to what a viewer has experienced is identified by them as 'real' and the further away from a viewer's experience, the more abstract a representation is to them.

The various contributions about abstraction assist in identifying some generalisations about how 'real' a visual narrative representation is interpreted by readers from a social semiotic approach. Illustrated in Figure 2.34, a range of modality markers including colour, shape and line are used by a sign-maker to represent various levels of realism in an image. However, the degree of realism or believability of image content is also dependent on the experience of the viewer. That is, a greater familiarity with the characters, setting and events represented influences the degree of realism interpreted by the sign-reader. Abstraction is therefore dependent on both the sign–reader and the sign–maker.

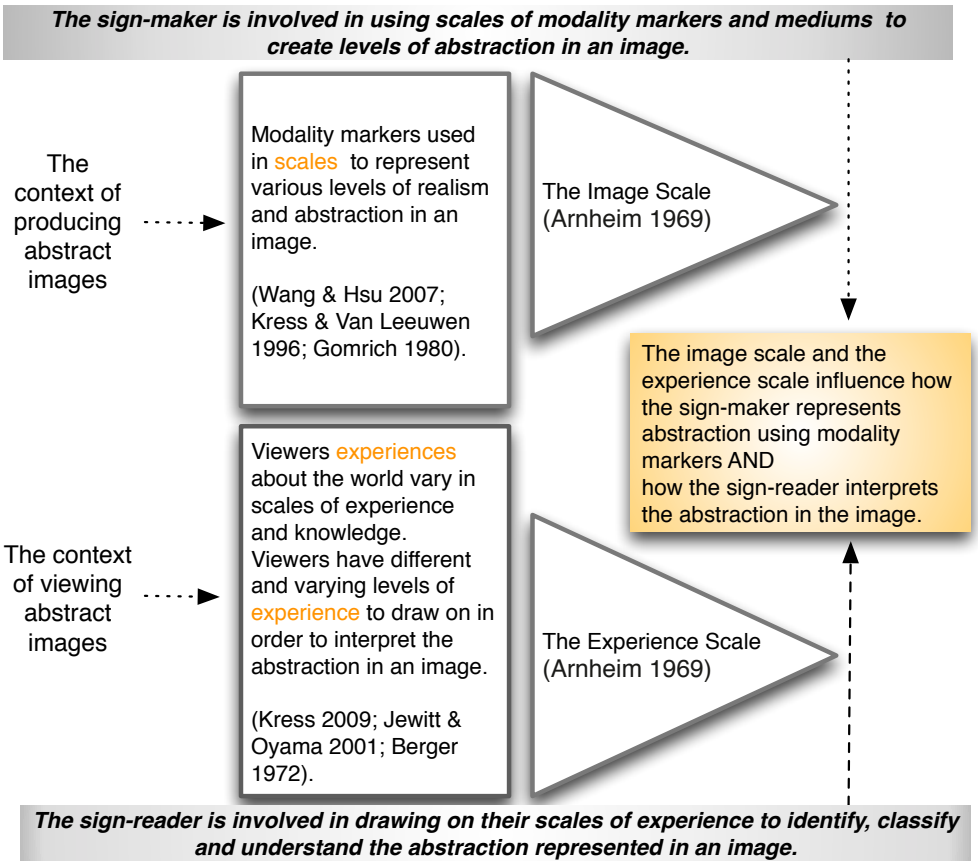


FIGURE 2.34: Producing and interpreting abstraction in image

The theoretical views discussed above suggest that while abstraction is often used to generalise or simplify meaning with viewers, the effect does not always make interpretation easier. Abstracting an object from context and increasing the generic representation may result in making meaning potentials less accessible to viewers if the signs used deviate so much from a sign–reader's experience, beliefs and values that they cannot bring a picture's message to life (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Mitchell 2005; Arnheim 1969). As Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, p. 58) argue, "reality is in the eye of the beholder; or rather what is regarded as real depends on how reality is defined by a particular social group."

While discussed in detail in chapters four, five and six, it is relevant to mention at this point that degrees of abstraction in BST and NAPLAN writing assessment prompts have varied considerably over the years. If, as scholars suggest, highly abstract images that are far removed from sign–readers' experiences are more difficult to interpret, (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Mitchell 2005; Wang & Hsu 2007) then students with fewer experiences of content represented in pictures may be disadvantaged. Certainly, Kress states that, "simple points of abstraction can have profound consequences on meaning" (2010, p 10). This being the case, the use of abstraction in current visual writing prompts may have a significant impact on students' responses and suggest the following questions:

- What levels of abstraction are used in visual writing prompts?
- What do students identify as abstract, real or true in these prompts?
- What role does abstraction play in students' interpretive work?
- How do levels of abstraction impact the types of narratives students compose?

2.2.3. The compositional metafunction

The compositional metafunction of a non–linguistic visual resource enables the social relations from the representational and interactional metafunctions to create a 'meaningful whole' (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006, p 176). Figure 2.35 describes how three interrelated systems, or principles work to enable the relations between people, places and events in an image. Information value is the first of these systems. This principle deals with the placement of participants on the page facilitating particular meanings and positions of power. As indicated in Figure 2.35, this system focuses on the layout of elements in the page. The model adopts a Western viewpoint of layout in regards to left, right, centre and margin positions enabling representational and

interactional meanings through dimensions of visual space (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006, p. 197). The second principle deals with salience. This system places different weights of importance on participants in an image by using visual elements to draw different degrees of attention to visual content. The third principle, framing, signifies how participants belong or are separated from each other. These connections are enabled by the use of dividing lines and edges.

The interrelated principles of information value, salience and framing were useful for analysing the compositional function of the visual writing prompts considering the varying compositions used over the years. These systems also assisted in analysing how students responded to these different layouts and designs and, in turn, the impact of compositional variances on students' generated ideas.

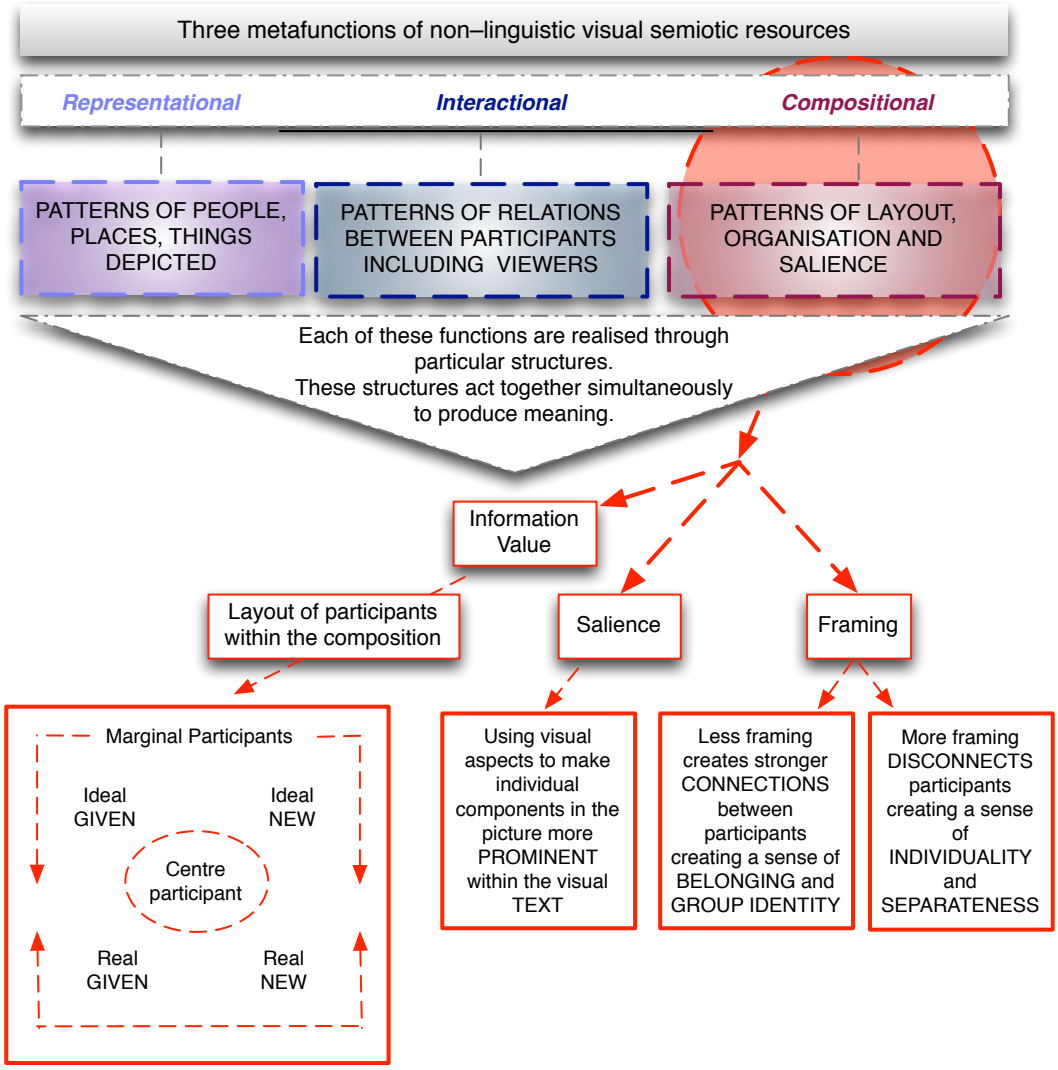


FIGURE 2.35: The compositional metafunction

Kress and Van Leeuwen's compositional approach to interpreting images provided a way to describe meaning potentials in visual writing prompts within this study. While other researchers have applied this approach in varying ways (Callow 2013; Huang 2014; Jewitt 2009; Jewitt & Oyama 2001; Machin & Niblock 2008; Painter et al. 2011), categories labelled by Kress and Van Leeuwen underpinned the conceptual matrix, analytical framework and educational scaffold I developed. These resources are discussed in chapter three. Before embarking on explaining these resources, the second theory informing my study needs to be addressed.

2.3. Narrative theory

This study is about investigating the role visual prompts play in generating students' ideas for writing narratives. Thus, the study has two dimensions. One dimension investigates a framework for interpreting image. The second is how students respond to visual narrative representation and translate their interpretations for composing this genre. Thus, a social semiotic approach to exploring narrative representation in writing assessment prompts was taken. The framework for investigating images was explored in the previous section. This section discusses Narrative Theory, as this explains the purpose and the structural phases included when writing stories.

Stories occupy an important place in human life and society is deeply immersed in stories as lives are lived (Abbott 2009). These life stories furnish us with a method for learning about the world and a way to tell others what we have learned (Berger 1997). Theorists argue that narrative is one type of story genre used to record actual experiences, disseminations from the seeds of real experiences or those from imagined events.

> Narrative starts with the very history of mankind [sic]; there is not, there never has been anywhere, any people without narrative; all classes, all human groups have their stories, and very often these stories are enjoyed by men [sic] of different and even opposite cultural backgrounds: Like life itself, it is there, international, trans historical, transcultural (Barthes 1975, p 237).

In this composing and sharing of true or untrue stories as narrative, a range of semiotic resources is used. Stories can be shared through oral and written language, moving and

still pictures, and non–linguistic auditory means such as the sounds created by instruments all of which have the potential to reflect diverse personal, cultural and historical practices.

The importance of stories is also mirrored in the Australian Curriculum and English Syllabus. As with the previous English K–6 Syllabus, the recently released Australian Curriculum and the NSW Board of Studies English K–10 Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum, includes the telling, viewing, reading and writing of narrative from the first year of schooling through to Higher School Certificate English (Australian Curriculum 2008, 2014a; Board of Studies NSW 1999b, 2007a, b, 2013). Narrative has also been firmly embedded in State and National Literacy Assessments from Year Three (Australian Curriculum 2014b; Board of Studies NSW 1999a) reflecting the importance of this type of text. The current English K–10 Syllabus however places greater importance on the viewing of narrative and for the first time includes the mandatory teaching of visual texts in an across all stages. This move suggests a growing prominence of visual as a story telling mode (Bakhtin 1981; Bal 1985; Martin & Rose 2008a; Martin & Rothery 1980, 1981; Plum 1988).

Past English K–6 Syllabus documents have referred to narrative as a fictional discourse (NSW BOS 1998). Conversely the recently released Australian Curriculum and the NSW BOS English K–10 Syllabus (ACARA 2014) affords more flexibility to the classification of this genre. The Australian Curriculum describes narrative as “a story of events or experiences, real or imagined” (ACARA 2014). This same flexibility is reiterated in the new English K–10 Syllabus with acknowledgement that while the social purpose of texts are generally imaginative, informative or persuasive, their classification can be arbitrary, possibly belonging to more than one of these three overarching categories.

In relation to this study, educational shifts from an implied dichotomy between truth and fiction in narrative to one more reflective of scholarly work acknowledging the scale of truth represented in this text type is identified. The increased flexibility afforded to the classification of narrative influences the characteristic features foregrounded in curriculum and in turn, the features that students employ to interpret and compose narrative. Examining how the students understood narrative assisted in identifying the knowledge resources they brought to interpret a visual story for single images.

2.3.1. Theoretical models of narrative

Labov and Waletzky's (1967) influential work initiated my examination about how narrative is viewed theoretically because their model is frequently cited in scholarly work and used as a platform for further research (Bakhtin 1981; Cazden et al. 2005; Christie & Derewianka 2008; Martin & Rose 2008a; Martin & Rothery 1981; Plum 1988). Their model is also re-contextualised in New South Wales English K-6 Syllabus and national assessment marking criteria (Board of Studies NSW 1999b, 2007a; Ministerial Council on Education 2010).

Labov and Waletzky's work (1967 cited in Labov 1997) identifies common linguistic–structural properties in oral narratives within two overarching broad functions: the referential and the evaluative. The referential function captures and retells experiences in an ordered set of clauses, which match the sequence of the original experience. The evaluative function is said to also require readers to draw on real experiences in order establish some point of personal interest, identify the unusuality of reported events and connect with the point being made by the author in some way. These functions do not overtly classify narratives as factual or fiction. Rather the principles suggest that narrators draw on real experiences to compose and connect emotionally with the story being told. Other models of narrative suggest the same flexibility about the fictionality of narrative, particularly the work on genre by the Sydney School in the early 1980's (Martin & Rothery 1980). As with Labov and Waletsky, Rothery and Martin's model indicates a scaling of truth in narrative. This is realised in the way stories are structurally organised. Drawing on Britton's earlier work (1975), Martin and Rothery's research organised different genres found in students' writing into two overarching, contrastive, register typologies (1980, pp. 22-23). These two typologies are labelled as transactional and poetic. Transactional typology deals with communicating messages or information and poetic typology deals more with forms of stories and contact. From these two strata, the poetic typology involves a graduating structure extrapolated in the following extract and illustrated in Figure 2.36:

> The poetic typology begins with recount, which involves the relation of a sequence of events that happened to the speaker. Narrative of personal experience is closely related to this genre except that the sequence includes a crisis, which must be overcome. Narrative of vicarious experience has to do with creating rather than recalling experience. When these events are imaginary the term fiction is used. With the

thematic narrative a story is created not only to entertain but to make a point (Martin and Rothery 1980, p 23).

The model by Martin and Rothery (1980) describes narrative as a built upon structure involving various types of stories. These begin with sequenced factual recounts usually from personal experience, building to vicarious narratives that can be real or imaginary.

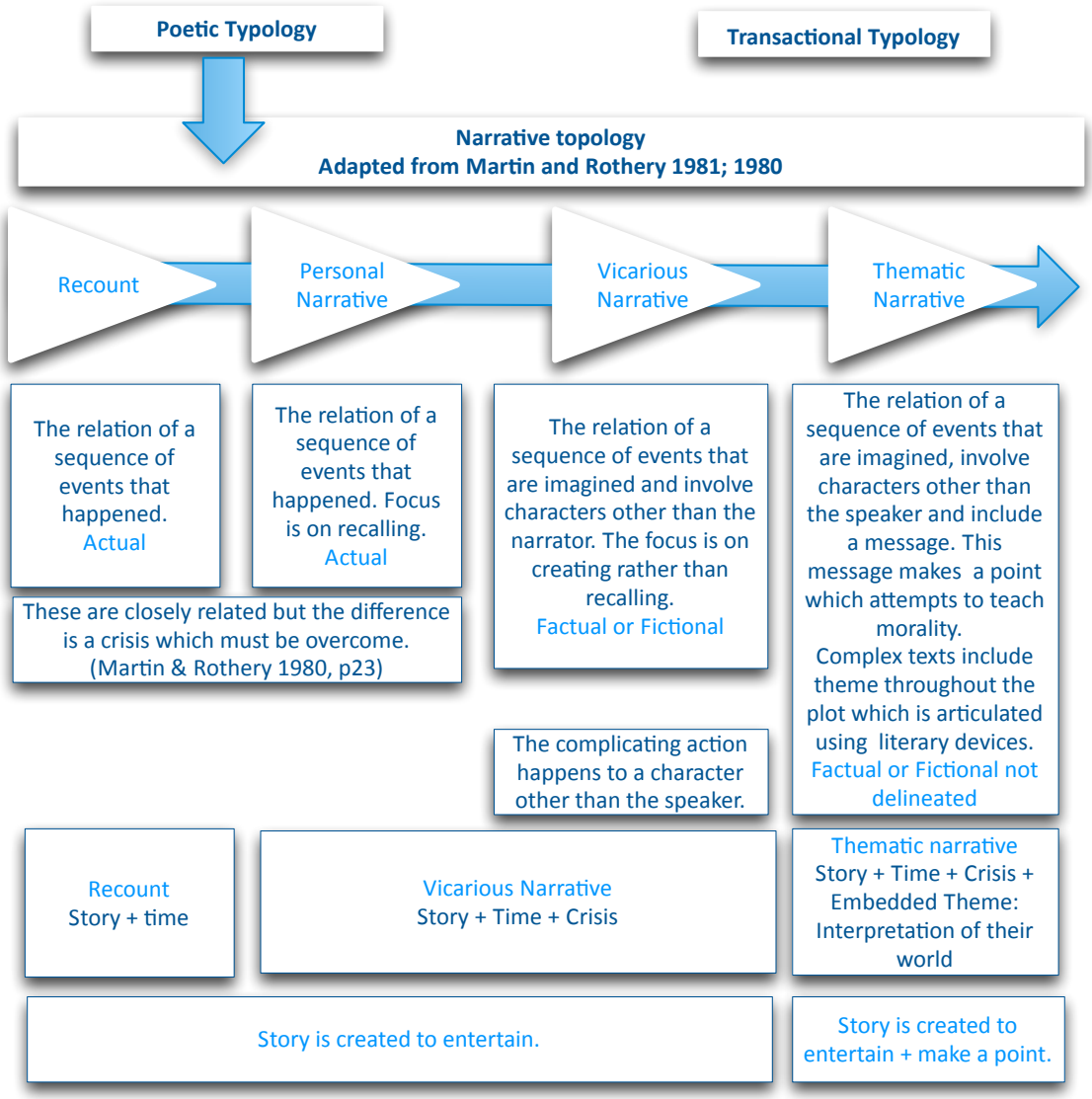


FIGURE 2.36: Narrative Topology according to Martin and Rothery (1981; 1980)

More complex stories, which articulate a message or a moral to their story are said to be thematic narratives and composed by mature writers. Scholars acknowledge that the effective use of embedded messages in thematic narratives is a later development in writing achieved by few members of society (Martin and Rothery 1980). Nonetheless, options for composing narratives in current writing assessment prompts encourage all

students from year three to consider themes such as friendship and loss (ACARA 2009), bringing the capacity of one prompt to stimulate a diverse student cohort into question.

At the time this study was undertaken, the English K–6 Syllabus (NSW BOS 1998) organised texts into two didactic typologies: factual and literary. Narrative was categorised as a literary text. As such, narrative was described as a text that explored and interpreted human experience to "evoke a reflective, imaginative and or emotional response" in the reader / viewer (Board of Studies NSW 2007a). However, with narrative classified as a literary rather than a factual text in these earlier curriculum documents, teachers and students may have assigned this text type as fiction specific. It was important to explore how the students in my study classified this text type because how they interpreted visual narratives in the writing assessment prompts was informed by their understanding of this genre.

2.3.2. A structural framework for narrative

Extensive research undertaken into the linguistic characteristics of oral and written narrative recognises the complexity and variations that can occur within the broad structural components of this genre (Christie 1999; Christie & Derewianka 2008; Labov 2010, ND; Labov & Waletzky 1967; Martin 2009; Martin & Rose 2008a; Martin & Rothery 1993; Propp 1968; Rose 2005, 2008). Despite the complexities and variations in the structure of narrative, the critical constitutes are seen as characters involved in a problem that needs to be solved. These inclusions flow within a periodic structure including predictable stages.

In earlier writing Labov (1967) argues that oral narratives comprise four structural stages. These stages consist of an orientation, a building to an event or events, a complicating action or a change in the state of the event and the termination of the event by a result or other reportable event. Later work by Labov (1972) proposed that mature narratives consist of six stages that include evaluative functions as shown in Figure 2.37. Known as known as the 'diamond' structure Labov and Waletzky's narrative model comprises of:

1. An abstract
2. An orientation including who, when and where the story is set
3. One or more complicating actions describing what happens
4. An evaluation explaining why or how the story was thought-provoking
5. A result or resolution to the happenings

6. An optional coda that brings the audience back to the present.

Within these predicable stages, it is argued contain less predictable complicating phases that interrupt the norm (Labov 1972). These phases are described as waves building to predicable stages, construed by logically linked experiences concerning people and places (Martin & Rose 2008). As indicated in Figure 2.37, evaluation phases may occur throughout the more predictable complication and resolution stages, or at the end of the resolution stage. As a founding work, the diamond structure is a good starting point as it has significantly influenced later models of narrative. Yet conjecture about the *predictable stages* exists. These propositions centre on the complication and the 'problem' within the narrative.

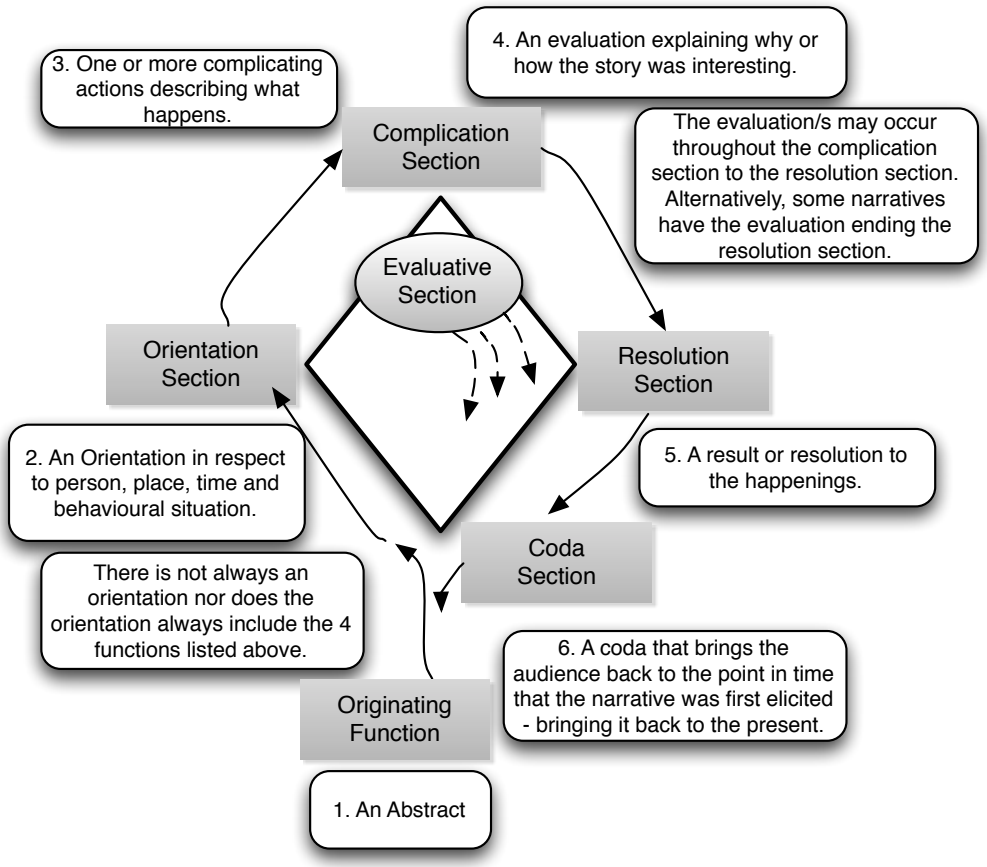


FIGURE 2.37: Labov's narrative diamond structural framework

Significant is the movement from the canonical stages identified in Labov and Waletzky's (1967) to the notion that while narrative moves chronology to create stages in the narration of story, sequenced predictable *stages* consist of one or more less predictable *phases* (Derewianka 1990; Martin & Rose 2008a; Martin & Rothery 1980; Rose 2008).

For example, Derewianka suggests that while the stages are highly predictable and more in–depth, phases are shorter discourse segments that are more variable moving the story along within the stages (Derewianka 2003). Plum also argues that narrative is less 'standard' as Labov's earlier model suggests, describing the '(Abstract) ^[1] Orientation ^ Complication ^ Resolution (Coda)' model as "an archetype of the fully formed, complex narrative" (Plum 1988, p 230). Further work on narrative has continued to stratify and refine Labov and Walesky's model, with Martin and Rose accounting for further variation in story types referring to narrative as one of the genre in the 'story family' (2008, p 51). These key notions from Narrative Theory provided, assisted my investigation into how the past and current English Syllabi explain narrative, what students identify and include when composing this type of text and, what large–scale narrative writing assessment tasks require of participants.

Complications within a story

Complicating actions are seen as fundamental to the deep structure of narrative across the literature (Bakhtin 1981; Labov & Waletzky 1967; Martin & Rose 2008a; Martin & Rothery 1981; Plum 1988). In Labov and Waletzky's four-stage model (1967) and Labov's later six–stage model (1972) a complicating action is a common narrative component that is resolved or closed in some way. However, descriptions of the complication-resolution stages and the less predictive phases in terms of the compulsory nature of the problem or requiring the problem to be resolved vary. Further discussion of the theoretical notions of the complication are important because of the way narrative is described, marked in current writing assessment tasks and shown in the visual narrative as part of the writing prompt.

Complications are not always described as having to be a negative event. The complication within narrative is described as a kind of "crisis where something unexpectedly goes wrong" (Martin and Rothery 1981, p.12). Bahktin (1981) describes complicating interruptions less definitively, explaining narrative as including changes of states arriving in constant waves of centripetal and centrifugal forces continuing throughout the telling of the story until closure. However, for Bahktin (1981), the interruptions are not classified as specifically positive or negative. Later work by Christie and Derewianka (2008) also discuss the waves of changes in narrative, referring to them

[1] ^ Symbol represents the chronological structure of the phases listed.

as a 'seesaw,' inducing emotional feelings from the reader – emotions that can be positive or negative.

Disparities around how often the complication stage arises, what is expected within these phases to pull the complication stage along and whether the problem needs to be resolved is widely discussed. As illustrated in Figure 2.38, drawing on Britton's earlier work (1975), Martin and Rothery organise the different genres found in students' writing into two overarching, contrastive, register typologies labelled as poetic and transactional (1980, p. 22-23). From these two typologies, they identify narrative as a built on structure beginning with recounts of personal experience without a problem to fictional thematic narratives. Narratives, as distinct from other story types, include a complication stage followed by attempts taken to "make it right" or a successful resolution to the problem.

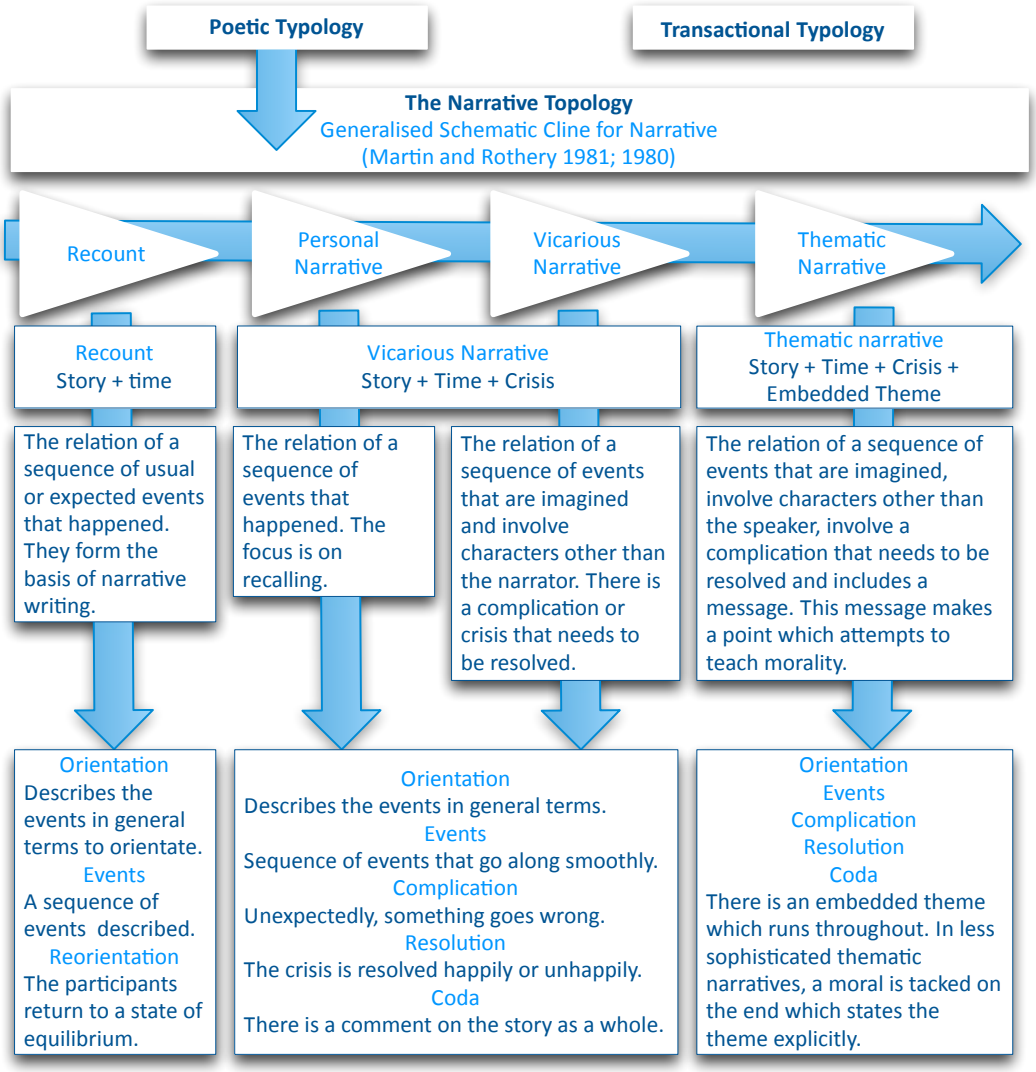


FIGURE 2.38: Martin and Rothery's general schema of narrative (1981; 1980)

Important to more complex narratives is the ongoing dispute about the resolution of a problem identified in earlier work on narrative. Research by Plum (1988) found that only 15% of the 134 stories he investigated included a complication-resolution stage. These results support his argument that the complication-resolution stage in narrative is not as 'standard' as other models suggest, concluding that the term narrative assumes "a greater homogeneity than the facts warrant" (Plum 1988). Debates continue in later work with Christie and Derewianka (1999) acknowledging that the problem–reaction phases emerging within narrative stages are not stock standard. They argue with similar absolute that the problem-reaction phase is not necessary but may appear in variable sequences within the predictable stages of narrative. On the other hand, from the kinds of stories Martin and Rose examined, the term narrative is still reserved "for the generic pattern that resolves a complication" (Martin & Rose 2008, p 52).

How the expectancy in narrative is disrupted *and* is responded to in narrative attracts continued debate. However, agreed in the literature is that narrative models are not rule driven codes but flexible tools assisting writers as they make meaning (Christie & Derewianka 2008; Martin & Rothery 1981; Bahktin 1981). These tools afford flexibilities about the type of conflict and structural arrangements within the generally accepted elements. The pliability of narrative expressed in Abbott's words:

> Narrative discourse is infinitely malleable. It can expand and contract, leap backward and forward, but we take the information from the discourse we sort in our minds, reconstructing a series of events that we call the story. It can be true, false, historical or fictional. But in so far as it is a story, it has its own length of time and order of events that proceeds chronologically from the earliest to the latest (Abbott 2009, p17).

To sum up, this section has identified that theory recognises narrative as being constituted by common organisational structures, yet also acknowledging complexities in this type of text (Bakhtin 1981; Herman 2004; Martin & Rose 2008b; Myhill 2010; Rose 2006; Stein & Policastro 1982). It is also understood narrators carry the story forward through predictable stages being also involved in the more intricate and less predictable phases (Abbott 2009; Berger 1997). However whether national writing assessments recognise the same plasticity for composing this type of text is brought to question. If this is not the case, it leaves students who deviate from a homogenised narrative archetype pigeonholed as less competent storytellers in these assessment contexts.

2.4. In summary

This chapter has addressed the social semiotic approach for reading visual narratives that are critical theoretical dimensions for my study. I used Semiotic Theory to design a *conceptual matrix* (Fig. 3.5) as a way to organise a metafunctional approach for reading a narrative picture. Narrative theory provided me knowledge about the classification and social purpose of this type of text. With Narrative Theory explaining the necessity to include people, places and events in predicable stages of story and the less defined phases in the way stories are composed, these degrees of delicacy could also be expected in the way a story was shown. I accounted for these delicacies in the development of an *analytical framework*, developed to assist me interpret possible meanings in visual narrative prompts (Figure 3.1 and Appendix A). The dimensions of the Social Semiotic approach and Narrative Theory also supported my construction of the questions I asked the students about narrative including the metalanguage I used to talk with them about possible meanings in visual narrative prompts. The metalanguage underpinned my design of an *educational scaffold* (Figure 6.10). These resources are explained in greater detail in the next chapter.

Chapter three

Building a visual framework for analysing visual writing assessment prompts

As explained in chapter one, this study originated from a concern about the role a visual prompt plays as stimulus for students' compositions in the context of large–scale writing assessments such as BST and NAPLAN. In examining how students responded to such stimuli, questions arose about the potential meanings offered in the visual prompts and problems that students experience when reading these. Scholars acknowledge the complexities of reading image and argue that developing students' metalinguistic skills is beneficial for making sense of what is available for viewing (Callow 2013; 2009; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006). To this end, I decided to draw on existing scholarly work to develop a *Conceptual Matrix* as a way of organising theoretical frames for reading image (Figure 3.1). I headed off in two ways using this *matrix* for my study. The categories and elements used in the *Conceptual Matrix* supported the metafunctional organisation and inclusions for an *Analytical Framework,* which I developed for examining the visual writing assessment prompts used in this study (Appendix A; Figure 3.9). Important to this resource was the inclusion of a wide range of visual aspects for reading image that could not be elaborated in the *Conceptual Matrix*. From this point and in terms of working with primary school students for reading non-linguistic visual narrative, the *Conceptual Matrix* underpinned the development of an *Educational Scaffold* (Figure 3.17 and Figure 6.10). The *Educational Scaffold* was designed to guide my conversations with the students about visual prompts using a common language. This chapter presents a detailed explanation of the resources I developed for their respective purposes.

3.1. Social semiotic tools for investigating the issues

Following is an overview of the four informing principles underpinned by theoretical perspectives for the design of the *Conceptual Matrix, an Analytical Framework and Educational Scaffold.* The utility of the *Analytical Framework* is then demonstrated by examining one of the visual writing assessment prompts used in this study.

Understanding how these visual writing prompts 'mean' involved exploring the contents that contributed to the communication of meaning in the text. O'Halloran (2011) uses the terms mode and modality to distinguish between the semiotic resources and sensory modalities used to communicate meaning. From this perspective sensory modalities, through which semiotic resources materialise, are categorised as visual (visual perception), aural (hearing), haptic (gestures, touch, body awareness) and others (taste, smell, perceptions of temperature, pain and balance). Following O'Halloran's description of visual modality, I identified the writing prompts that I was working with as monomodal because visual modality is the only mode used to materialise meaning in these resources. At the same time, the visual prompts contain linguistic and non–linguistic visual resources. So the prompts are monomodal but also multi–semiotic because different semiotics used to make meaning in the one visual mode. Painter and Martin (2012) argue these different semiotic resources use distinctive systems, each with its own particular affordances. Therefore, while I considered the visual assessment prompts as monomodal multi–semiotic resources, I remained mindful that the prompts included both visual semiotics that could offer meaning in different ways.

From the outset it was important to identify the driving social semiotic principles that could inform the design of my matrix. I began by asking questions about how to organise and describe the range of visual aspects that were discussed in chapter two. Developed from these theoretical contributions a *Conceptual Matrix* was derived to stratify aspects of social semiotic approach used for reading image (Blesser & Salter 2007; Callow 2013, 2009; Dalke & Matheson 2007; Halliday & Hasan 1985; Hood 2008; Jewitt 2009; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Painter 2012; Panteleo 2008a; Unsworth 2001). The *Conceptual Matrix* was organised with two topological strands centred on the three metafunctions being:

> *Strand One – Categories and elements:* This strand provides four sub–strands organising categories and elements used to analyse visual prompts.
>
> *Strand Two – Educational metalanguage:* This strand includes sub–strands that provide a common language to talk with students about the assessment prompts.

These topological strands are illustrated in Figure 3.1 then briefly explained.

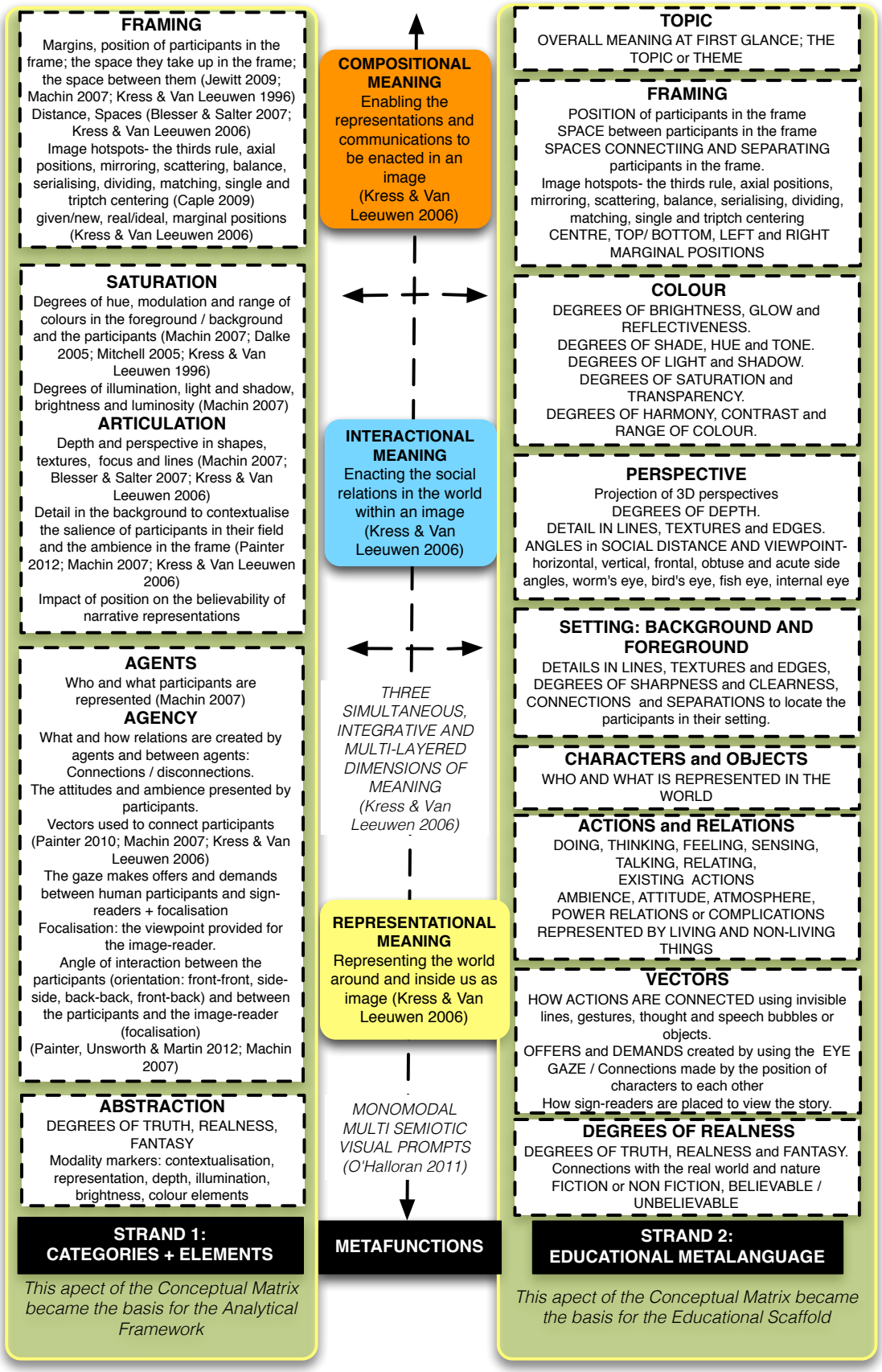


FIGURE 3.1: The Conceptual Matrix

The first strand was organised into four typological substrands that, according to the literature, are critical to producing image and narratives (Berger 1997; Huisman 2007; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Labov 1997; Painter 2012). These four substrands termed as categories being: *Framing; Saturation and Articulation; Agents and Agency; and Abstraction.* These four categories contain further descriptions referred to as elements. For example, 'Saturation and Articulation' include elements dealing with the use of colour, perspective, shapes and lines in a picture.

Alongside the second strand, an *Educational Metalanguage* was developed that aligned with the categories and elements. Strand Two was necessary for pedagogical purposes to recontextualise abstract concepts into language teachers could use in primary classrooms for analysing narrative pictures with primary aged students. As always, constraints in recontextualising theory as a metalanguage for classroom use required condensation of the complex range of elements thus the educational metalanguage is abridged. This strand considered what was central to narratives, whether linguistic or non–linguistic. Therefore the substrands contained aspects dealing with complication and how this is enacted. As such the substrands contain reference to characters, actions and relations between characters. Because these complications occur in time, place and often involve specific or circumstantial objects setting and objects are also included (Bal 1997; Huisman 2007; Labov 1997). The relationship between these two strands is discussed throughout the chapter as the development of this resource is discussed.

The *Conceptual Matrix* had provided a broad organisation of visual categories. However, I had identified two limitations with the matrix. Firstly, neither the extensive range nor the degrees of use could be adequately or comprehensively expressed in the matrix design. Second, the overview was not useful for recording interpretations of visual prompts as an analytical tool. In response to this need, I developed the *Analytical Framework*. My design of this framework was underpinned by four principles determined by asking about how I would identify a wide range of possible visual elements used in visual assessment prompts; what I would look for in terms of the social purpose of the visual text, and; what organisation would assist the analysis process.

By drawing on scholarly work to seek answers to these questions, I decided that the design of the *Analytical Framework* needed to be:

1. *Inclusive* of a wide range of visual categories used as meaning making resources (Callow 2013; Hood 2008; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006).
2. *Layered* in a topological design so that denotative *(representational)* and connotative *(interactive)* ways of viewing image were considered (Barthes 1977; Van Leeuwen 2001).
3. *Adaptable* for general use and specific instances (Halliday & Hasan 1985; Hood 2008; Martin & White 2005).
4. *Graduated* to incorporate the varying degrees and fine nuances that visual elements offer such as that afforded by variations in tone, brightness or transparency (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Martin 2011).

Principle one: Inclusive of a wide range of visual categories

Drawing on the *Conceptual Matrix* the analytical framework was designed in a stratified fashion with a comprehensive list of possible visual aspects organised under each metafunction as categories. Finer aspects of these categories referred to as elements were organised as subheadings. The list od categories and elements was drawn from scholarly work in the area of visual analysis (Callow 2013; Caple 2009; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Jewitt 2013; Painter 2012).

Principle two: A layered topological design

Van Leeuwen (2001) identifies layering of meaning as a key idea in Barthian visual semiotics. I adopted the Barthian approach to include layers of visual meaning in the Analytical Framework. The two layers being the denotative and connotative layers enacting meaning in the visual mode.

- *The denotative layer:* Barthes (1977) describes denotation as the first layer of meaning. This layer involves identifying what or who is depicted in the image and what the participant is doing.
- *The connotative layer:* Barthes (1977) describes connotation as the second layer of meaning that occurs after the identification of general denotative meaning. This layer involves what participants 'stand for', the values expressed and existing power relations amongst the participants.

One example of how the layered approach worked is with the category 'colour'. Adopted as a broad category, colour can act to depict people, objects, and setting. To illustrate this point, I draw on an example for the NAPLAN 2009 prompt 'The Box'

shown in Figure 3.2. In this picture white light is coming out of a red box. Finer colour elements of tone, brightness, saturation and transparency are used to depict the white light. The light intensity increases closer to the box can be construed as being representative of a life source.

Categories concerned with appraisal were also included in the framework because this aspect is commonly discussed as important in written narrative (Derewianka 2011; Martin 2011). Visual categories for enacting interactional meaning with the sign–reader for making value judgements, identifying feelings or interactions were included: the connotative meanings. Within each category, elements related to the connotative meaning such as those regarding truth or lies; mystery, fantasy or realities are also included. In relation to Figure 3.2, interpretations may include reference to what the white light means, how the colour red makes the sign–reader feel and what the increase in transparency suggests in regards to power or energy. Combined with the use of darker tones in the background, limited setting in the picture contributes to conjuring a sense of mystery about the box (agent) and what is happening (action).

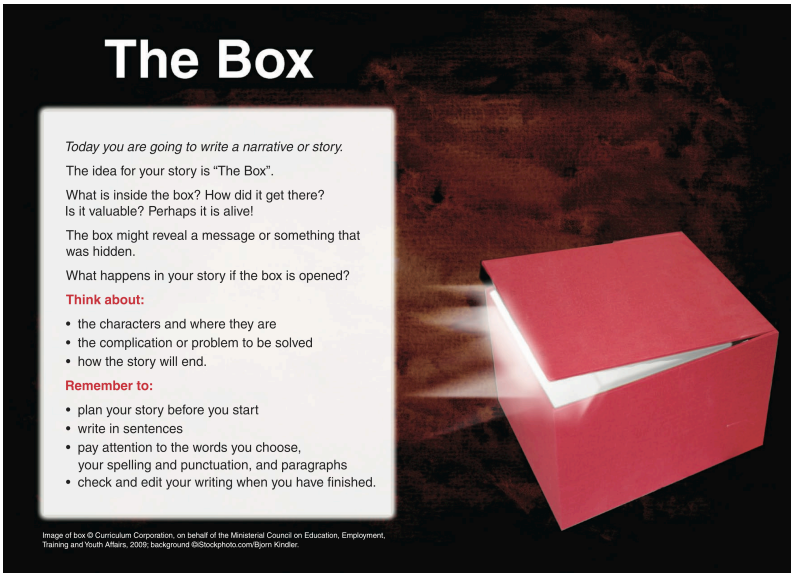


FIGURE 3.2: The red box from the 2009 NAPLAN writing prompt

Sign–readers may also be required to connate the logico–semantic relationships between visual categories. That is, ideas about colour need to be integrated with other categories and elements such as, position, perspective and distance. The box is represented as opening. However, the position we are placed in does not allow us to see into the box, contributing to the mystery of its contents. Despite the lack of view inside the box, the position places us in a power relation as we view down onto it. The

opening lid of the red box and the white light expanding out from the red box, are all meanings at play to interpret impending counter expectancy about the content within the red box. The inclusion of a wide range of elements that encourage denotative and connotative meanings could contribute to deeper interpretation of the visual stimulus. These meanings can be construed along with all that a sign–reader brings from their own experiences and all they know about the affordances enacted in the image to individuate meaning in this instance.

Principle three: Adaptable for general systems and specific instances

Systemic functional linguistic (SFL) theory offers the perspective that meaning in language involves understanding both 'system and instance' (Halliday & Hasan 1985; Martin & White 2005). The 'system is the 'far-away' generalisations about how language works, and instances are the 'close-up' specifics of language in individual texts. Hood (2008, p. 352) describes the relationship between system and instance as "the system as a generalised potential of language to the instance as a selection from that potential."

The system–instance relationship is a valuable theoretical tool for my study, as the close study of visual prompts involves applying generalisations about visual semiotic resources in individual instances. Scholars from the systemic functional linguistic perspective argue sign–readers draw on what they know about the language of representation in general and then apply this knowledge to the use of language in an instance (Hood 2008; Martin 2011). I wanted to be able to record how students applied general principles about an image when responding to specificities in the images within each writing prompt.

If students are to make sense of visual prompts then they need to apply their general knowledge about the way a visual category enacts meaning as a semiotic system, to the way it is used in specific instances. This means understanding how a category such as colour is used to enact interpersonal meaning generally (learning about visual aspects), and applying this knowledge to interpret the way colour is used in each prompt (learning to interpret meaning potentials). This also requires sign–readers to draw on the finer elements of categories to realize meanings. For example, in the 2009 NAPLAN 'The Box' writing prompt shown in Figure 3.2, the colour red is used on the box and infused using tonal and saturation variances in the background. The use of these finer elements may act to construe a particular 'stance' or relations about what is depicted and what is going on. Painter (2003, p. 184) argues stance has long been a

part of systemic functional linguistics in terms of an interpersonal linguistic resource that is “always in play when the parallel ideational one construes meaning.”

Understanding the role visual elements play in construing a sign–reader’s stance is important because attitude, judgment and relations are principle interactive aspects in narrative (Painter 2003; Painter & Martin 2012). These appraisal systems enable sign–readers to feel for the characters or feel along with characters represented in an image, encouraging viewers to judge their behaviour ethically (Macken- Horarik 2003).

Despite these general understandings about characterisation, the way a visual category is used to enact characters feelings can vary in each instance. Colour is one example where its function varies in each instance. This requires a sign–reader to understand the general ways in which pictures mean and respond to the possible representational, interactive and composition functions accordingly in each instance. For example, the use of the colour red in the 2010 NAPLAN visual writing prompt ‘What a Mess!’ differs from that used in the 2009 prompt ‘The Red Box’. As shown in Figure 3.3 unlike the high degree of salience and connotative meanings attributed to the use of red in ‘The Box’ prompt, the colour red in this instance is used in an unmodulated and sporadic way.

FIGURE 3.3: Use of the colour red in the NAPLAN 2010 writing prompt

For example, the colour red is found on the girl’s arm plaster cast, as a splatter of paint on the right of the text, as one of many colours on the paint handprints, and representing objects in a bedroom scene. In this instance, the use of colour identifies

with what or who is depicted in the image rather than playing a role to enact connotative meanings. From a compositional viewpoint, the colour red is used in a balanced way on both left and right vertical sides of the page. Thus demonstrating the different functions of a visual category within a picture and in different instances.

In addition to the different functions a visual category can play in an image, categories can have general meanings and culturally specific meanings to groups or individuals. For example, the category labelled 'vectors' includes a number of finer elements dealing with offers and demands realized through the special vector of the gaze such as direct, in–direct, transactional, and a bi–transactional gaze. General understandings about how vectors connect participants and actions can be included in the matrix. However, eye contact (or lack thereof) conveys different meanings to people of various cultures. Western culture understands direct contact as more intimate and respectful, whereas other cultures see this non-verbal gesture as a sign of disrespect (Atsushi & Johnson 2003). Likewise colour can construe different cultural meanings. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002, p. 343) argue meanings enacted by colour are culturally and socially located as evidenced in the following excerpt.

> We know that colour means. In China and other parts of East Asia white is the colour of mourning; in most of Europe it is the colour of purity, worn by the bride at her wedding. Contrasts like these shake our confidence in the security and meaning of colour and colour terms. On the one hand the connection of meaning and colour seems obvious, natural nearly; on the other hand it seems idiosyncratic, unpredictable and anarchic.

When considering the social and cultural diversity of the students likely to be interpreting NAPLAN writing prompts, what remained vital in the design of the framework was the understanding that signs 'mean'. Signs 'mean differently' to sign-makers and sign–readers depending on the cultural context of production and viewing, as was therefore important for the framework (and subsequent educational scaffold) design to remain broad, encompassing features that could relate to sign–readers' context of situation (Halliday 2002).

Principle four: Graduations to indicate degrees of use

Sign–makers use a range of categories such as colour, line, perspective and spacing in varying degrees to realize meaning in the visual mode (Martin 2011; Kress & Van

Leeuwen 2006; Halliday 2002). Martin (2011) argues that it is not so much about what each sign means but how it means. I draw on this argument to focus on how sign-makers use categories such as colour, framing, or perspective in various degrees to realize subtle meanings or changes in visual meaning. I refer to the visual writing prompt 'The Box' presented in Figure 3.4 to illustrate this principle.

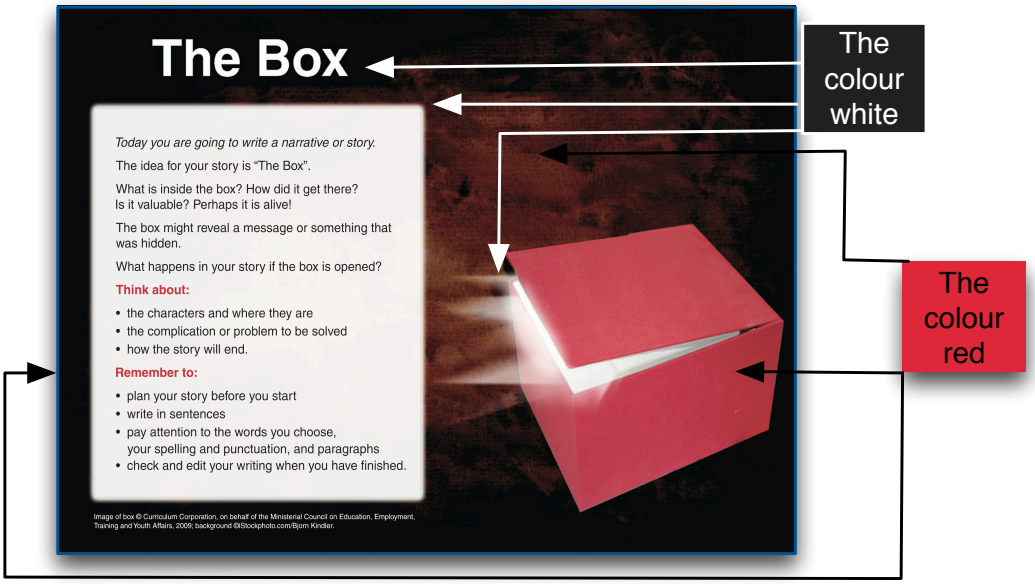


FIGURE 3.4: Use of colour in the 2009 NAPLAN writing prompt

The non–linguistic component in this text illustrates how categories and the finer elements of categories are used in degrees to make meaning. One example in the way the colour white is used. On one hand, a highly unmodulated and saturated use of white is used as background to the words within a distinct physical frame. Yet, in the same image, varying degrees of transparency are used to illustrate light coming out of the box. The increased salience of transparency enacts a gradual change in power, movement and directionality of light that could not be enacted without colour modulation. However, limited understanding of the way transparency and illumination can depict power would in term limit a viewer's identification of these possible meanings in this instance. I drew on Hasan's (2005) explanation regarding the semantic hierarchy of allocation to explicate degrees of use and availability of categories, such as colour, to construe visual meaning. The use of degrees assisted me to identify what was available in the writing prompts but also to better investigate what the students took up when they responded to images in each instance.

3.2.The conceptual matrix

As the overarching organiser of my understanding about the social semiotic approach to reading image, the challenge set before me when designing the conceptual matrix was how to organise a matrix that reflected the symbiotic and interdependent metafunctions that take place during the process of interpreting meaning from a visual semiotic. In order to map out the visual elements for the matrix underpinned by the three functions of image as shown in Figure 3.1.

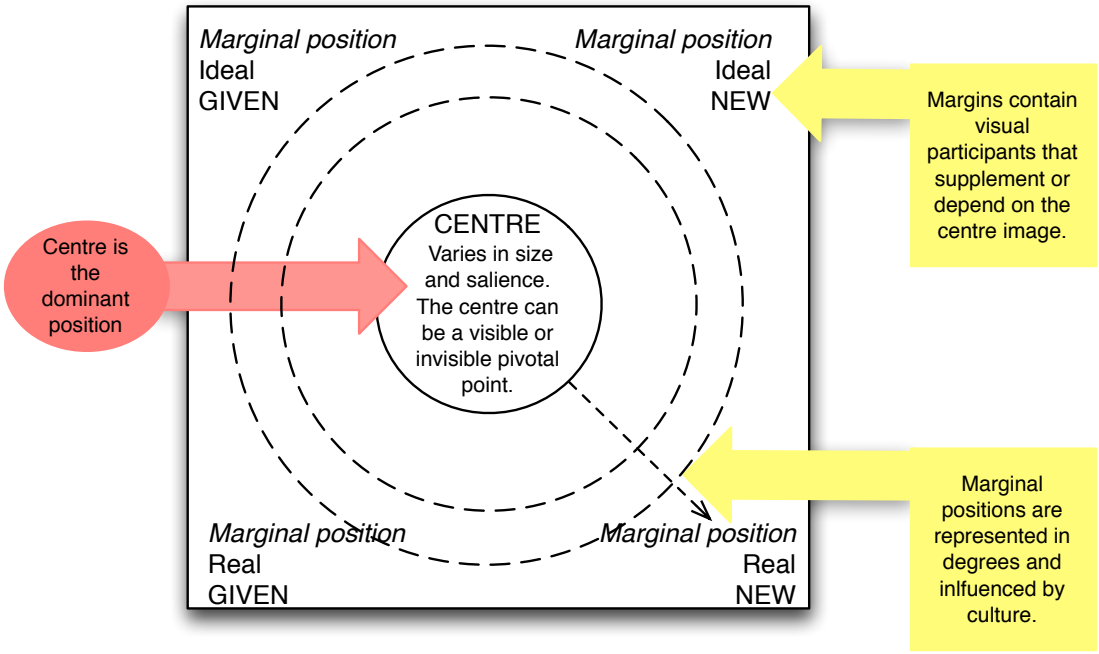
Central to this matrix were the three metafunctions of image, around which the two strands were aligned. These strands were labelled *'Categories and Elements'* and *'Educational Metalanguage.'* The first strand on the left was developed further for the purpose of analysing the visual writing prompts as researcher. Stand two, was further developed as a pedagogical tool for talking with primary school students about visual assessment prompts using a common metalanguage.

3.2.1.Strand one

The first strand, presented by the left side of the matrix, includes four typological substrands: *Framing; Saturation and Articulation, Agents and Agency; and Abstraction*. The *Framing* substrand predominately deals with categories and finer elements of those categories used to create cohesive texts in the visual mode. Categories in this substrand serve to place participants into a whole, providing unity and order amongst them holding participants together or separating them – the compositional meaning. This category drew on Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) triptych dimensions of visual space, illustrated in Figure 3.5 (p 91), to consider the positioning of participants in a visual frame.

In addition to Kress and Van Leeuwen's work (2006), I drew on compositional framework concepts by Caple (2009). Caple (2009) argues compositional principles other than the centre and margins described by Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) information value system provide tools for analysing images. Caple (2009) identifies compositional elements that vacate the centre, placing participants in other compositional axes to "produce not only a more challenging and aesthetically pleasing image but one that is more harmonious" through a balance system (Caple 2009, p. 157). These different positions, described as 'image hotspots,' position participants to depict representational and interactive relations in an image. Figure 3.6 illustrates the

comprehensive position options and the range of choices on offer for enabling potential meanings.



Adapted from Kress & Van Leeuwen's (2006, p 197) triptych dimensions of visual space

FIGURE 3.5: Kress and Van Leeuwen's triptych dimensions of visual space

Painter, Martin and Unsworth (2011) also discuss the compositional function of pictures dealing with balance by drawing on visual art perception by Arhneim (1982) and Dondis (1973). In their analysis of narrative picture books, they found Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) left–right polarisation not as convincing for analysing narrative picture books. Instead they argue polarisation (diagonal, vertical and horizontal) is most common composition in picturebooks where relations to either the setting or between the character are enabled (Painter, et al 2011). As a result I considered theoretical contributions regards the use of positioning and perspective for interpreting visual meaning potentials in the matrix (Painter 2012; Painter & Martin 2012; Painter, et al 2011; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Caple 2009).

The *Saturation and Articulation* substrand was predominantly used to list visual aspects that enact social interactions and contextualise participants in the world – the interactive function of an image (Painter 2010; Mitchell 2005; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006). Those elements involving degrees of colour are organised within the substrand *Saturation.* These visual elements include those said to evoke subtle enactments of attitude and tone. Categories dealing with detail, contextualisation, social distance,

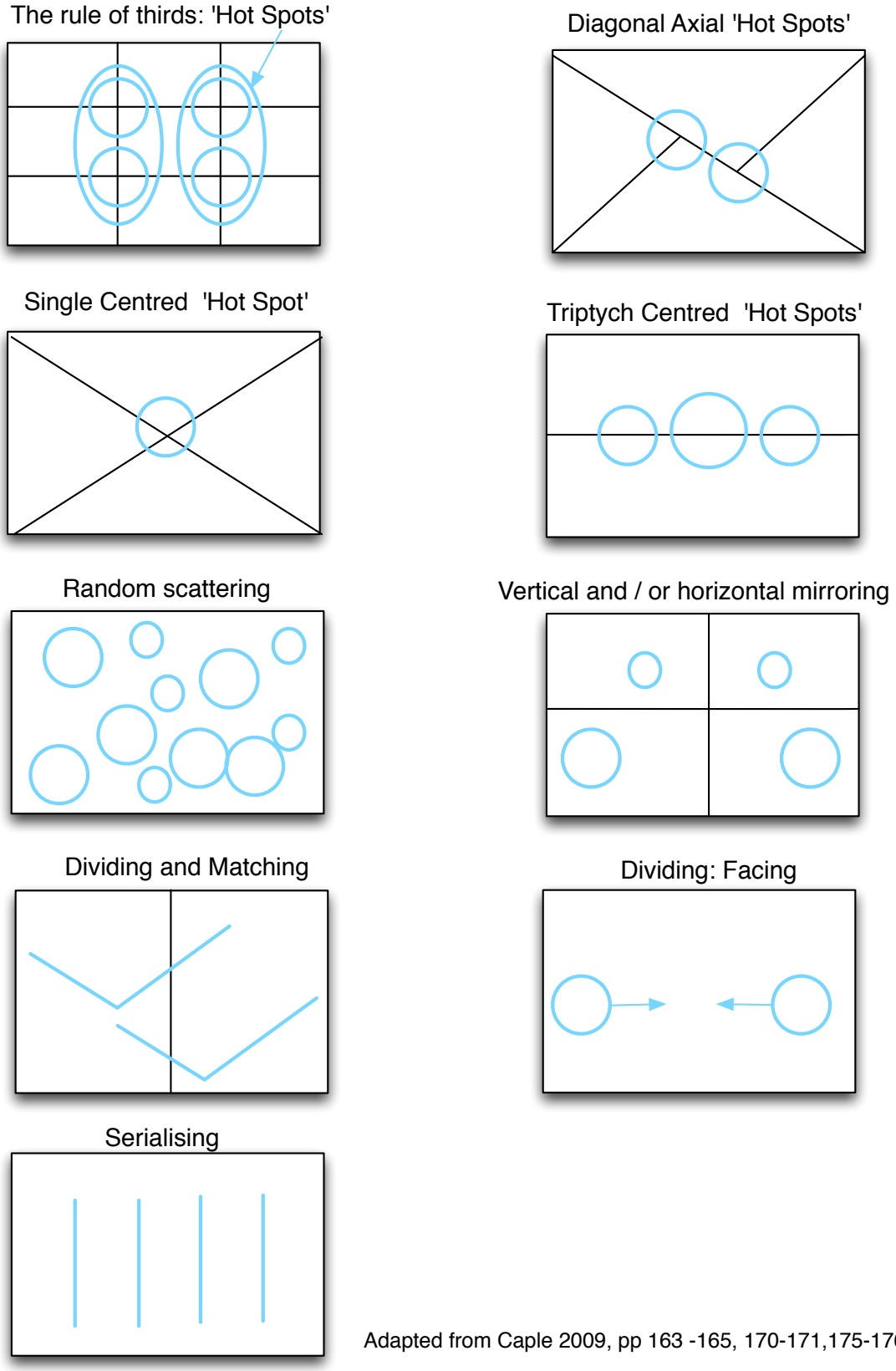
and participants (characters) in their field (setting) were organised under the substrand *Articulation.* Categories in this substrand involve articulation of feelings evoked in an image. Kinds of feelings include attitudes involving emotion, ethics and aesthetics (Martin 2005). When organising categories within this substrand, it was also important to consider significant work in the field dealing with attitude and affect in pictures. Attitude and affect are concerned with how the sign–readers feel about the atmosphere in pictures (Painter 2011). This is also referred to as the overall ambience of a picture (Painter 2003, 2007, 2012).

Because the purpose of visual prompts is to provoke ideas for the subsequent writing of narrative actions, settings, characters, relations and interactions using vectors were important to consider. These components of narrative were labelled as a substrand *Agents and Agency* that is, the 'who' in an image, the 'what' and the relations between agents in an image. Agents and agency depict representational meaning because they deal with categories that represent the world inside and around us (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006). *Agents* and *agency* are also understood to enact attitude; intimacy, distance; values and judgements about the world all contribute to realising interactive meaning potentials (Painter 2007; Painter et al 2011; Painter & Martin 2012). Thus these finer elements were included in the matrix.

In addition to these elements, connections between characters in the narrative and between characters and sign–readers are identified using the term vectors. Vectors are considered an essential element in visual narrative representations because they use invisible connections such as lines, gestures, objects, and special connections such as the gaze to create agency in visual narrative representations (Jewitt & Oyama 2001; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Arnheim 1969).

Like the other strands, the fourth substrand is also inclusive of the three simultaneous metafunctions of image. Categories in this substrand deal with how visual elements instantiate *Abstraction* in pictures. Drawing on the various theoretical perspectives about abstraction discussed in chapter two, I approached abstraction using a cline of representation utilising the quantitative reduction and shape simplification categories described by Wang and Hsu (2007). I also drew on Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) modality cues for evoking abstraction in image. Paramount to how I organised visual elements dealing with abstraction, was my awareness that abstraction is a subjective inscription influenced by the context, the sign-maker and the sign–reader (Forceville

2009; Machin 2007; Mitchell 2005). Therefore the matrix needed to be general enough to encompass individual analyst views.



Adapted from Caple 2009, pp 163 -165, 170-171,175-176

FIGURE 3.6: Compositional frame analysis

3.2.2. Strand two

The second strand, the *Educational Metalanguage,* was developed to recontextualise the categories and elements identified in strand one using a language to talk about the categories with students. The first step in designing this second strand involved identifying technical language from the categories and elements, then substituting the difficult terminology with more everyday language. This process resulted in nine substrands as shown in Figure 3.1. Each substrand is explained in more detail.

Topic refers here to the first representational impression a sign–reader infers when viewing the visual prompt. This substrand involves the representational meaning first expressed verbally by the students when they talked about a prompt. This substrand posed questions about what appeared to stand out in the visual writing prompt at a student's first glance and what words they initially used to explore a recognisable theme or idea from the picture.

Framing, the next substrand, retained the same title from the categories on the left side of the preliminary matrix as I decided this was a common term used across primary school syllabuses. While framing is a textual function, contrasts in framing and margins are useful when considering ambience in pictures (Painter & Martin 2011). Ambience, functionally interpersonal, deals with the overall affect and 'emotional pull' in a picture. This visual narrative component is realised by the varying use of colour, line and texture afforded to pictures (Painter 2012). I drew on the interactional function of these elements for flagging attitude, judgement and appreciation of narratives. Drawing on this substrand I planned to ask students about how characters and objects were placed in a frame and the relations that existed between them.

While the term *Framing* remained the *Saturation and Articulation* sub–strand was substituted with the categories of *Colour, Perspective and Setting*. These terms are commonly used to describe components of narrative in curriculum and assessment. *Setting* also includes finer elements dealing with the background and foreground in pictures. These sub–strands were labelled separately because of the number of finer elements accompanying each category.

Considering the *Saturation* sub–strand was predominantly about use of colour, the sub heading was labelled as such. Finer elements for the category *Colour* include brightness, transparency, reflectiveness, shade, hue, tone, light, shadow, harmony and

contrast. As discussed earlier in this chapter, while colour enacts interactional meaning in pictures, it can also function representationally evoking calmness, or a dreamtime state as shown in Figure 3.7. In this instance, colour not only functions to enact interactional meanings, this visual resource functions to bind meaning in the text. The use of complementary colour tones throughout the text also acts to cohere the linguistic and non–linguistic semiotic resources within the physically contained margin.

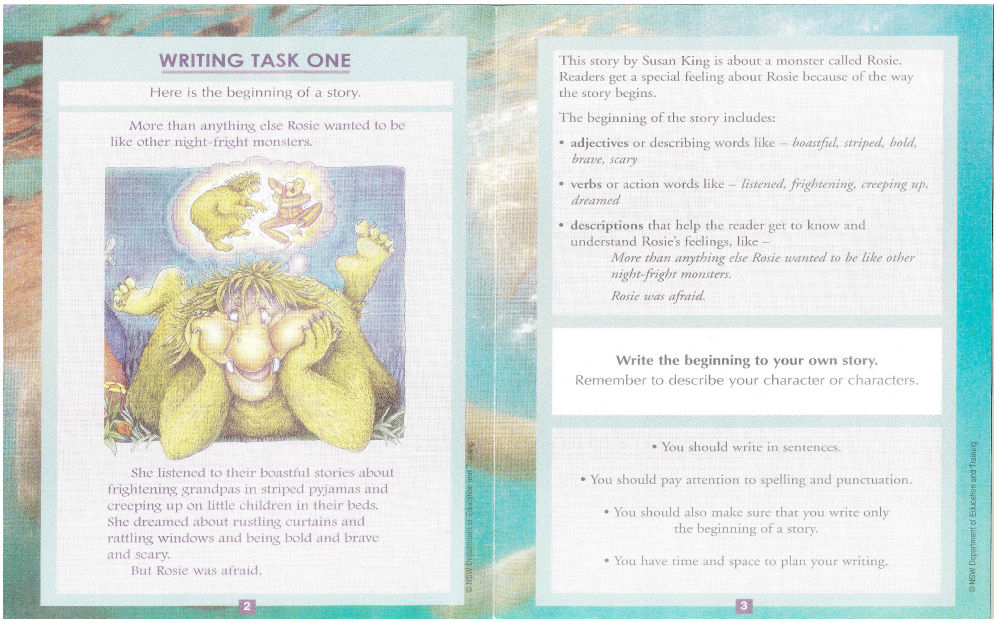


FIGURE 3.7: Colour functioning to represent, connect and organise meaning

Perspective refers to aspects such as depth, lines, textures, edges, angles, social distance and viewpoint. *Viewpoint* incorporates horizontal, vertical, obtuse and acute side angles, worm's eye, bird's eye, fish eye and the internal eye view. Theorists argue that point of view, also referred to as orientating the reader (Painter 2012), enacts interpersonal connections between characters represented in the picture and between the characters in the picture and the sign–reader (Economou 2008). Painter (2012) also argues that a sign–reader's point of view can be manipulated quite readily by changing the position of the characters or the view that the sign–reader is placed in to look. I considered these arguments when developing the analytical framework. While all of these elements may not have been available in the selected writing prompts, they were included in the matrix as possible elaborations used in visual semiotic resources. This substrand prompted me to ask students about how detail, line, position and perspective were used in the prompt and what meaning they gathered from these aspects.

The third category *Agents and Agency* was substituted with the four topic headings relevant to terms used in primary curriculum to describe narrative components: *Characters and Objects; Actions and Relations*. Because actions realise a range of different behaviours, various processes including doing, thinking, feeling, sensing, talking, relating and existing actions were included. Actions involve characters and from these actions agency and power relations are evoked. Hence power relations evoked between characters in an image were a finer element included in this category.

Vectors are understood to be the invisible lines, gestures, objects, thought and speech bubbles that make connections between participants in an image. Following from the discussion in chapter two, vectors are critical ways in which pictures show connections between characters in an image and, between characters and viewers. This category therefore follows on from actions and relations in the matrix as 'vectors' contribute to realising agency in an image. Included in this category is the special vector that evokes offers and demands between participants and between sign–readers, and participants in an image: the gaze. In recognising the importance of vectors in enabling agency in an image (Kress 2010), I explored how vectors were used in the writing prompts and developed questions from these categories to ask students during the interviews about agents, actions and agency such as:

- What are the characters doing? Thinking? Feeling? Sensing? Relating?
- What do you think might be happening and what is there that tells you so?
- Who is looking, where are they looking and what do you think they are seeing?
- What expressions tell you this is so?
- Are the participants offering or demanding your attention?

As a way of thinking about Abstraction and talking with students about this concept, I decided to use '*Degrees of Realness'* in Strand Two as possibly more familiar language for primary school students. If I was to understand where the students were challenged by the non–linguistic component in the writing assessment prompts, investigating what appeared 'believable' to them in a visual text was essential. I used this term to describe how real or natural the characters and events appeared to the students rather than from the viewpoint that the truth about the world is enacted in pictures. I drew on Painter's (2012) explanation about truth in terms of how believable the events and characters appear by the use of visual elements afforded to the picture. From the social semiotic perspective, I also adopted the view that a sign is composed

from the sign-maker's motivation and interpreted by the sign–reader depending on their social views and purpose. Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) concept of modality was incorporated to explore degrees of realness about the characters, events and setting in the picture aspect of the prompts. For example, in Figure 3.7, Rosie, an imaginative character, is given life–like facial colouring imitating a type of realistic skin tone. Using colour this way enacts 'realness' about the character despite the caricature drawing. The picture also imitates the real world by using colours in objects that actually exist in the natural world. That is, representationally the picture represents the sky as blue, the grass as green and rocks in earth tones.

3.3. The analytical framework

The *Analytical Framework* (Appendix A and Figure 3.8) evolved from Strand One of the *Conceptual Matrix*, to make the concepts from theory usable as an analytical tool for examining BST and NAPLAN visual writing assessment prompts. Drawing from the concepts outlined in Strand One of the *Conceptual Matrix*, The *Analytical Framework* shares the same theoretical underpinnings; it is divided into the three compositional, interactional and representational metafunctions. Within these three dimensions of meaning, visual categories are listed. The categories are organised under the same four sub–strands used in the *Conceptual Matrix*: *Framing; Saturation and Articulation; Agents and Agency;* and, *Abstraction.* In some cases elaboration of each category is provided in complementarity for example 'Vectors' is accompanied by text further explaining this visual tool and elaborating on various ways this tool can be used 'between characters / between characters and the sign–reader.'

In accordance with the four design principles outlined in the initial pages of this chapter, the framework was designed to be inclusive, layered, adaptable and graduated. Despite the common principles and theoretical similarities, there are fundamental compositional differences between the *Conceptual Matrix* and the *Analytical Framework*. Where the *Conceptual Matrix* provides an overview of possible categories for reading a visual narrative, the *Analytical Framework* evolved from the *Conceptual Matrix* as an analytical tool designed to record analyses of each assessment prompt, thus appears as a network that continues over five A4 sized pages rather than a one A4 page overview used in the matrix design (Appendix A and Figure 3.8). This design feature enabled greater specificity within each visual category, additional explanatory keywords or probing questions. The framework design also provided a method for

recording the various degrees of use afforded by visual elements to an image using a continuous scale approach (Martin 2011). Using this approach, a cline is illustrated by a broken (dashed) line between the boxes in the table. The dashed line symbolises graduations in meaning, allowing the analyst to record degrees of use such as the degrees of transparency used in 'The Box' shown earlier in the chapter (Figure 3.4). However, not all the categories operate on a cline (or scale). As illustrated in an excerpt from the *Analytical Framework* in Figure 3.8, some categories, such as processes, are subclasses that are organised using an unbroken line as defined boxes.

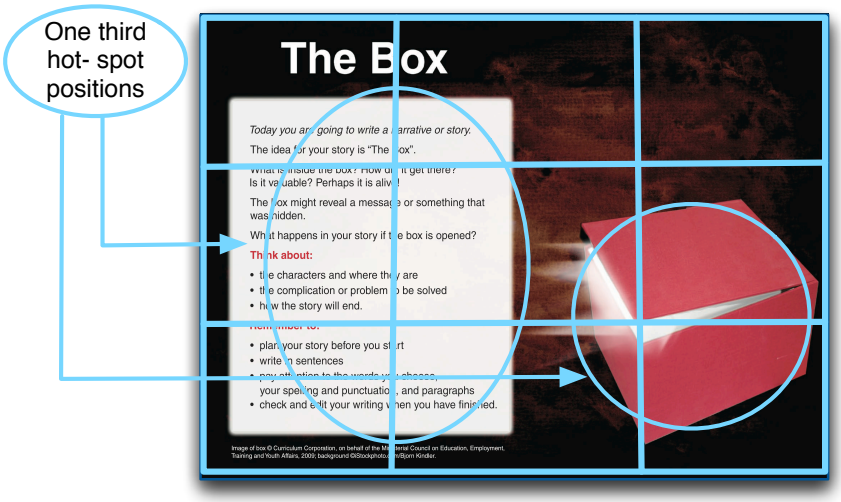


FIGURE 3.8: One-third hot spot position

At the core of the design, the three metafunctions, understood as interdependent dimensions, remained a challenge when organising visual categories and elements for representing narrative as pictures. The use of boxes and tables produced a more lineal design less replicating of the simultaneous and interdependent metafunctions. However, the design also allowed me the flexibility of moving around the framework as meaning potentials were identified during my analysis of each writing assessment prompt.

Figure 3.9 includes one section of the analytical framework dealing with the compositional function to illustrate how the categories are organised. The categories are on the left of the table with finer elements and degrees within that category adjacent. For example, the category *Image Hotspots* in the furthest left column is supported by finer descriptions about positioning along the same row. A number of choices within each category are available in the *Analytical Framework*. As illustrated in Figure 3.9, once selections have been made, the appropriate boxes are shaded. In

the example illustrated below in Figure 3.8, the object is positioned in the one-third hot spot position on the page and the box labelling this position in Figure 3.9 is shaded.

COMPOSITIONAL MEANING	‘*Framing* *Triptychs / Centre / Margin*					
Dominance of and interaction between semiotic resources	Image is central		Image and text co-exist			Text central
	image dominant	polarizes: centre acts as a mediator	balances	symmetrical	interwoven	verbiage dominant
Placement of verbiage and image in the text	Adjacent *Horizontal plane*		*Vertical plane*		Interrupted *Interpolating*	
	verbiage on left image on right	image on left verbiage on right	image above verbiage below	verbiage above image below	image-verbiage-image	verbiage-image-verbiage
Position in the horizontal frame	left margin immorality, sacred		centre			right margin goodness, everyday
Position in the vertical frame	top margin (high in the frame) high power, positive mood, high class, idealist, sacred					bottom margin (low in the frame) low power, low class, grounded, realistic
Image Hotspots	1/3 rule	diagonal axial	single centered	triptych centered	random scattering	
	dividing and matching	dividing and facing	serialized	vertical / horizontal mirroring		
Frame Size – – – ►	small spaces / varied placements		space between image and frame balanced			large spaces
Frame Integration	Separates: The physical frame creates a difference	Separates: Separated by spaces within the frame	Integrates / Connects: resources occupy the same space white or colour	Overlaps: Elements ‘bleed’ into other images’ spaces	Mediates: Create links between the elements	Contrasts: Indicate differences between elements
		Some text uses same colour background – cohesion through colour				
Framing Choices: Margins	re-focalized ambient white coloured	Bounded by a Margin contained breached all within breaks	surrounded limited all around partial	Unbounded: no Margin contextualized individuated/ fills page	localised iconic /minimal	decontextualised no setting

FIGURE 3.8: Excerpt from the analytical framework

The *Analytical Framework* also allows for various explanations of positioning in visual texts (Caple 2009; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Painter 2012). As illustrated in Figure 3.10, drawing on Painter's (2012) argument that diagonal polarisation creates an emotional pull in the visual text can evoke tension between the words and picture in this instance. Caple's (2009) explanation of the hot spot zones can also be applied to identify that the title and the picture are brought into importance by being placed in one-third hot spot zones.

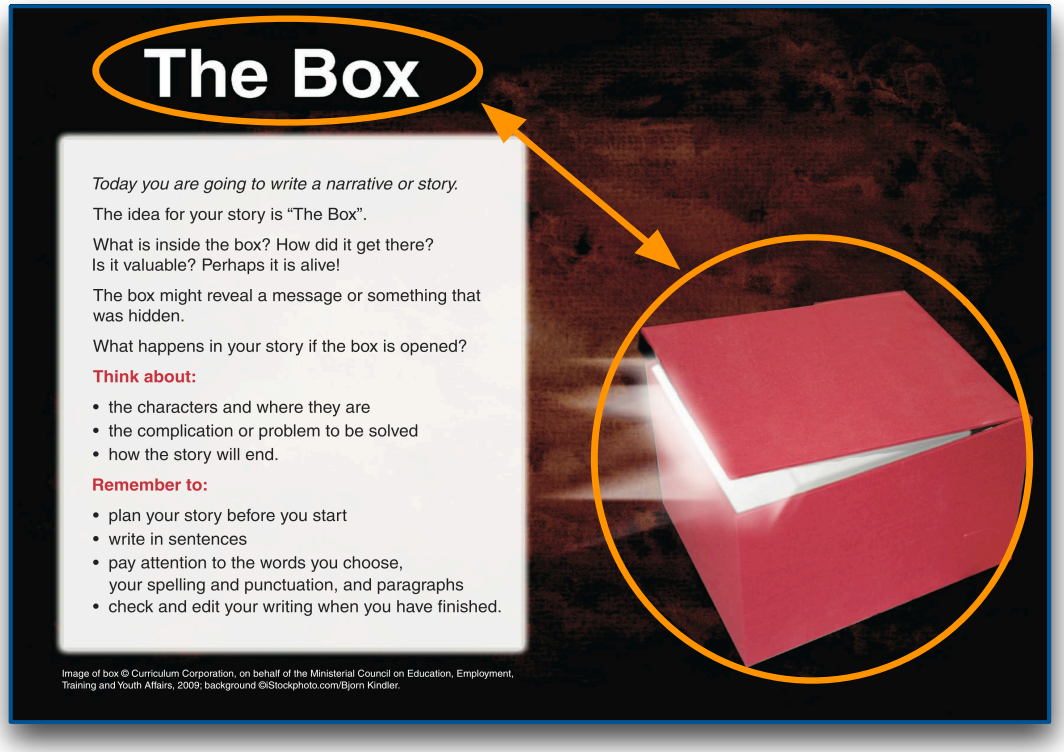


FIGURE 3.10: Polarisation and hot spot zones

The following Figure 3.11 presents the complete *Analytical Framework* followed by an examination of the image in one of the BST prompts, 'The Egg' (DET 2007) utilising this analytical tool.

REPRESENTATIONAL MEANING	‘*Agents and Agency* Identified theme or topic						
Agents (characters and objects) Who is represented? *Agency* Who does what in the image?	an individual	a few individuals	a small group	small groups	a large group	large groups	a population
	Non-representational *Participants not seen but present*			Representational *Participants present*			
How are the characters represented? – – – ►							
	High stereotype			*Low stereotype*		*Individualistic*	

Processes Vectors representing actions	Action Transactional		Action Non-transactional		Reactional	
	Active	*Passive*	*Active*	*Passive*	*Transactional*	*Non-transactional*

Processes (agency / actions) What gets done? What does the action result in?	Actions with consequence					Actions without consequence
	Material	Behavioural	Mental	Verbal	Relational	Existential

Abstraction / realness / familiarity – – – ►	REAL / GIVEN familiar / everyday		some underlying values and topic		symbolic	IDEAL / NEW deeply abstract

FIGURE 3.11: The Analytical Framework

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Colour*	*Contact and relations*						
Colour: Brightness (Linked with illumination) – – – ►	play of light / absence of shadow (pessimism, deception, lies)		Absence of light	dark and light	obvious light source	Extreme brightness (optimism, honesty, truth)	
Colour Features: Illumination (Glow or reflectiveness) – – – ►	no light or shade (only lines used to show contours)		shading rather than shadows		Reflective	illumination and shadows (naturalism and play of light)	
Colour: Shade – – – ►	flat / generic / unmodulated (simplified or fantasy world)					different shade/ fine nuances of a given colour (complex, natural, realistic world)	
Colour: Depth – – – ►	no depth or perspective no overlapping		minimal depth or perspective simple overlapping			Deep perspective complex overlapping / multiple viewpoints	
Colour: Hue – – – ►	cool colours (blues / greens) (cold, calm, distance)					warm colours(reds / oranges) (warmth, energy, vibrancy)	
Colour: Tone – – – ►	two shades of tonal graduation (black+ white or one colour + two tones of that colour)					Maximum tonal graduation (multiple tones of colour)	
Colour: Transparency, modulation and saturation – – – ►	transparency		mid range transparency			opaque	
Colour: Harmony and contrast – – – ►	complementary colours harmonize		a range of complementary and contrasting colours			contrasting colours	

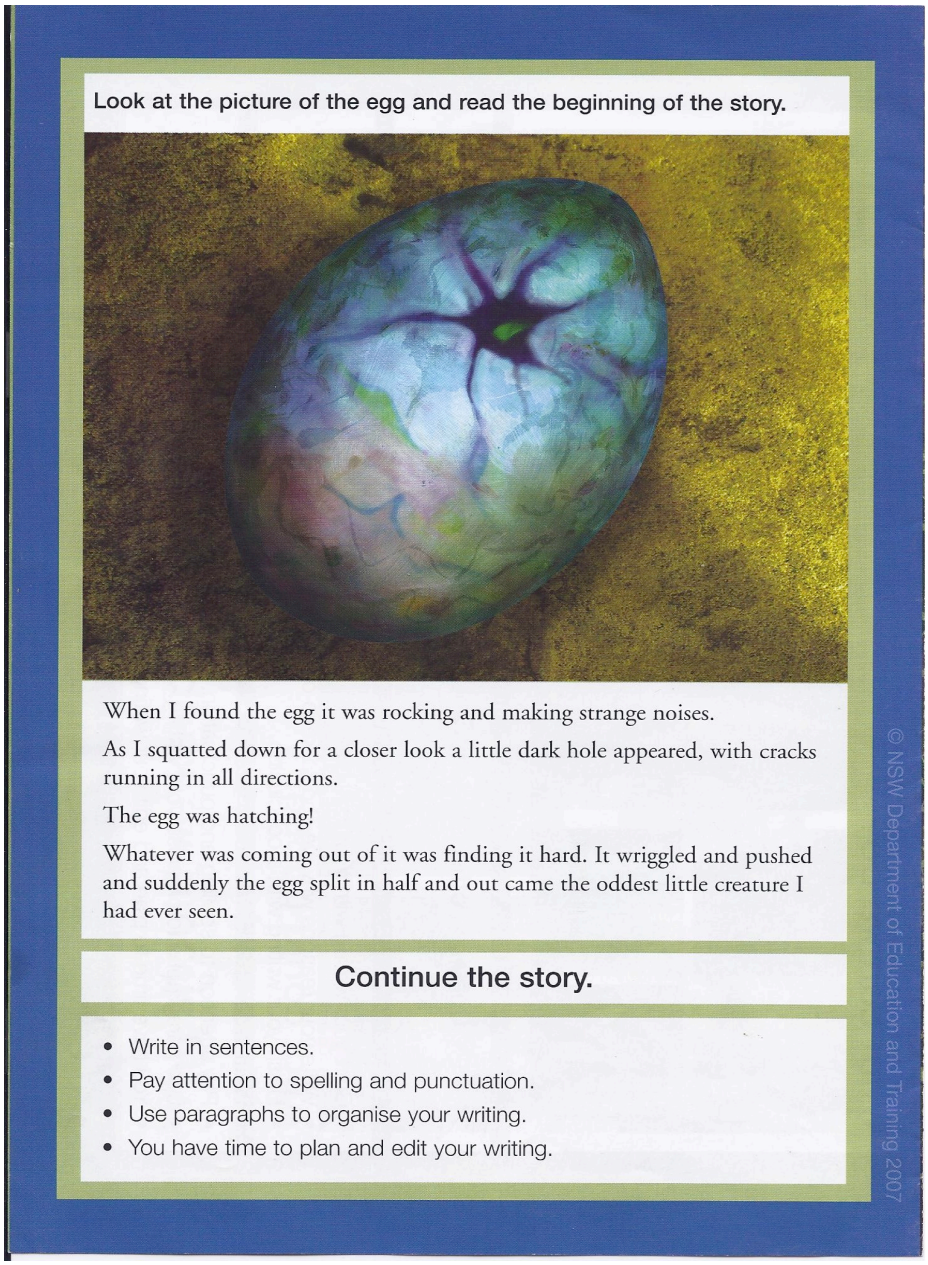
INTERACTIONAL MEANING	‘*Contact and relations*					
Perspective and atmosphere Depth – – – ►	Flat and frontal perspective		Some participants show 3D dimensions			Deep 3D perspective
Perspective: Lines, edges and textures – – – ►	Simplistic line drawing / cartoons Minimal detail and texture		highly defined participants			Sharp, finely grained / photographs textured and realistic
Perspective: Angles + Social Distance – – – ►	Close up Intimacy		Mid range			Distant Anonymity
Perspective: Angle of interaction Power relations – – – ►	looking down at the participant (vertical) Viewer has power over the participant		Looking at / across (horizontal) Equality		Looking up at the participant in the frame(vertical) Participant has power over the viewer	
Perspective: View	worm’s eye view	bird’s eye view	fish eye view	internal eye	frontal view	side view
Perspective: Orientation	back-to-back	back-to-face	face-to-face	side by side	face to viewer	back to viewer
Salience – – – ►	no dominant image		dominance with some images			focus on one feature
The Setting: *Foreground and background* Articulation in background – – – ►	contextualized / detailed background blurring of background (natural)		sharp lines indicating more artificial environment		decontextualised / no articulation in background irregular patterns / unmodulated	
Articulation in foreground – – – ►	no connection with location and setting		strong connection with location and setting		‘hyper-real’	

INTERACTIONAL MEANING	*Contact and relations*					
Ambience / Atmosphere / Emotional pull ---►	Positive judgment and overall feeling about the image			Neutral	Negative judgment and overall feeling about the image	
Contact: Focalisation *Vectors:* Social relations enacted through the gaze a) Between characters	No gaze or involvement (observe)	Side-on looking out of frame (offer)	Provide information (offer)	Side-on looking / Glimpse / inviting (low demand)	Direct gaze-confrontational / Close contact (high demand)	
b) Between character/s and sign–reader	No direct gaze = no involvement *Sign–reader is placed as an observer.*	Unmediated	Mediated + inferred	Mediated along with *the character Sign–reader looking over the character's shoulder.*	Mediated as if character *Sign–reader is placed as character on angle.*	Direct gaze *Character is looking directly at sign–reader.*

COMPOSITIONAL MEANING	*'Framing* *Triptychs / Centre / Margin*					
Dominance of and interaction between semiotic resources	Image is central		Image and text co-exist			Text central
	image dominant	polarizes: centre acts as a mediator	balances	symmetrical	interwoven	verbiage dominant
Placement of verbiage and image in the text	Adjacent *Horizontal plane*		*Vertical plane*		Interrupted *Interpolating*	
	verbiage on left image on right	image on left verbiage on right	image above verbiage below	verbiage above image below	image-verbiage-image	verbiage-image-verbiage
Position in the horizontal frame	left margin immorality, sacred		centre			right margin goodness, everyday
Position in the vertical frame	top margin (high in the frame) high power, positive mood, high class, idealist, sacred				bottom margin (low in the frame) low power, low class, grounded, realistic	
Image Hotspots	1/3 rule	diagonal axial	single centered	triptych centered	random scattering	
	dividing and matching	dividing and facing	serialized	vertical / horizontal mirroring		
Frame Size – – – ►	small spaces / varied placements		space between image and frame balanced			large spaces
Frame Integration	Separates: The physical frame creates a difference	Separates: Separated by spaces within the frame	Integrates / Connects: resources occupy the same space white or colour	Overlaps: Elements 'bleed' into other images' spaces	Mediates: Create links between the elements	Contrasts: Indicate differences between elements
		Some text uses same colour background – cohesion through colour				
Framing Choices: Margins	Bounded by a Margin				Unbounded: no Margin	
	re-focalized white / ambient coloured	contained all within / breached breaks	surrounded all around / limited partial	contextualized individuated/ fills page	localised iconic /minimal	decontextualised no setting

3.3.1. Utilising the analytical framework

The *Analytical Framework* that evolved from the *Conceptual Matrix* is also underpinned by the social semiotic approach to visual analysis. This section remains within this arena explaining and deploying the *Analytical Framework* as a tool for examining the non–linguistic visual aspect of the BST writing assessment prompt 'The Egg' (DET 2007) illustrated in Figure 3.12.



Look at the picture of the egg and read the beginning of the story.

When I found the egg it was rocking and making strange noises.

As I squatted down for a closer look a little dark hole appeared, with cracks running in all directions.

The egg was hatching!

Whatever was coming out of it was finding it hard. It wriggled and pushed and suddenly the egg split in half and out came the oddest little creature I had ever seen.

Continue the story.

- Write in sentences.
- Pay attention to spelling and punctuation.
- Use paragraphs to organise your writing.
- You have time to plan and edit your writing.

FIGURE 3.12: The 2007 BST writing prompt

It is understood the representational, interactional and compositional meaning of an image act simultaneously. Yet due to an organisational limitation the *Analytical Framework* separated each metafunction for recording and coding purposes. However

I remained mindful of the simultaneous meaning–making notion while discussing the prompt analysis in alignment with the structural organisation of the *Analytical Framework*.

Representational meaning depicted in the prompt

The representational metafunction in a visual narrative refers to the actions, the characters taking part in the actions, and the settings where the actions occur (Painter & Martin 2012). As illustrated in Figure 3.13, these aspects of image are also termed agents (characters) and agency (actions) in the *Analytical Framework*.

REPRESENTATIONAL MEANING *Agents and Agency* Identified topic or main idea
Agents (characters and objects) Who is represented? *Agency* Who does what in the image?
How are the characters represented?
Processes Vectors representing actions
Processes (agency / actions) What gets done? What does the action result in?
Abstraction / realness / naturalism Where do the actions take place? Does the image place the participants in the real or ideal? Is the theme ideological? Is there a conflict between real and ideal in the text? How does it connect or disconnect with the viewers' experiences?

FIGURE 3.13: Excerpt from the analytical framework dealing with representational meaning

Using these categories, I analysed 'The Egg' prompt picture as one comprising of a marbled blue egg–like object located on a rock–like surface (agent). The object appears to be cracking suggesting a life form is about to hatch from the egg. Connecting these aspects, the visual narrative depicts an egg (agent) and a life event occurring (process) that is set in time (agency and realness).

The identification of a number of visual elements suggests that the egg is not inanimate. These include the use tonal colour, depth and shade accompanied by lines to construe a life–like 3D object. The affordances of tone also assist to depict a complication. For instance, cool blue and green luminous tones are used alongside warming purple and red tones at the base of the egg to evoke a changing metamorphic state. These intra–semiotic connections continue to answer narrative questions about what is going on and what might happen next, thus setting up a narrative complicating phase.

Interactional meaning enacted in the prompt

The interactional metafunction enacts relations between the characters in the picture and between the characters and the sign–reader (Painter & Martin 2012; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006). Illustrated in Figure 3.14, categories included in the *Analytical Framework* dealing with interactional meaning are perspective, social distance, focalisation, articulation, colour, and ambience.

INTERACTIONAL MEANING
Colour: Brightness
Colour Features: Illumination (Glow or reflectiveness)
Colour: Shade
Colour: Depth
Colour: Hue
Colour: Tone
Colour: Transparency, modulation and saturation
Colour: Harmony and contrast
Perspective and atmosphere Depth
Perspective: Lines, edges and textures
Perspective: Angles + Social Distance
Perspective: Angle of interaction Power relations
Perspective: View
Perspective: Orientation
Salience
The Setting: Foreground and background
Articulation in background
Articulation in foreground
Ambience / Atmosphere / Emotional pull
Contact: Focalisation *Vectors:* Social relations enacted through the gaze
Between characters
Between character/s and sign–reader

FIGURE 3.14: Excerpt from the analytical framework dealing with interactional meaning

In relation to contact between the viewer and the character in 'The Egg' prompt, Figure 3.15 highlights how the image offers a connection between the viewer and the event without the intervention of a character (agency). Rather the viewer is placed as observer of an action that is taking place in the story without enacting their involvement in what is going on.

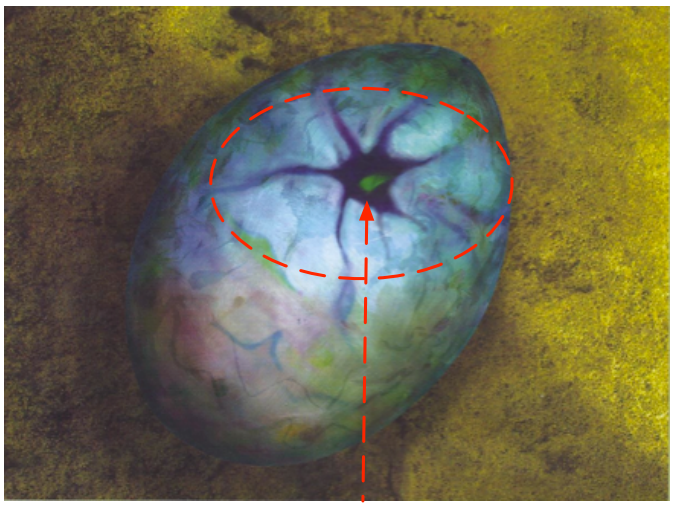


FIGURE 3.15: The character and action enacted in the 2007 BST writing prompt

Explained in detail in chapter two, this type of contact can be described as 'unmediated' or a 'default' view because characters do not act as arbitrators between the sign–readers and the visual story (Painter & Martin 2012). This example is not without an inferred character as a green speck inside the cracking egg suggests a life form. However, without direct eye–contact between the viewer and this character, there is little demands placed on the viewer, leaving close connections and affiliation between the living creature and the viewer restricted.

At the same time, the viewer is placed in a close–up position encouraging a more intimate interaction with what is going on and the character hatching from the egg. Two elements connecting the viewer with the character and action can be examined. The first deals with the close-up distance between the sign–reader and what is going on in the picture. Close up social distance increases the intimacy and connection between the sign–reader, the action (cracking egg) and the character involved in the action (a living creature hatching from the egg). In terms of involvement, the viewer is placed looking down on the event being placed in a position of power over the agent and agency in the picture.

In terms of feeling, the warm colour choices and smooth lines create a positive ambience about the action and the living within the egg (Painter 2008; 2007). However, without the *"creature"* (DET 2007) in view, emotion or effect of this character is not shown but rather left for the viewer to conjure.

Compositional meaning enabled in the prompt

Elements serving the compositional function enable the characters (or objects), actions and story phases to become operational in a picture (Painter & Martin 2012). These elements involve how the picture is framed, organised on the page and the salience of the non–linguistic visual semiotic in relation to verbiage. As shown in Figure 3.16 categories from the *Analytical Framework* dealing with the position and arrangement of the picture are listed.

COMPOSITIONAL MEANING
Dominance of and interaction between semiotic resources
Placement of verbiage and image in the text
Position in the horizontal frame
Position in the vertical frame
Image Hotspots Compositional Frame
Frame Size
Frame Integration (Van Leeuwen 2005)
Framing Choices: Margins (Painter & Martin 2012)

FIGURE 3.16: Categories and elements dealing with compositional meaning

The placement of the picture within the text is balanced with the verbiage taking up equal space the page. While this design technique suggests equal importance between both semiotic resources both provide different complementary information. That is, the initial words in the prompt act to instruct rather than narrate, asking the

viewer to *"look at the picture" and [then] read the beginning of the story",* suggesting the picture is the initial communicator of story.

Multi–semiotic resources in the prompt: words and pictures

The monomodal stimulus offers linguistic and non–linguistic semiotic resources thus being multi–semiotic resource. These semiotic resources are organised in an alternating descending pattern replicating the western cultural reading direction. The words are separated form the picture component by a white coloured background. Painter and Martin (2102) explain this compositional effect as one used in picture books to re–focalise the viewer to words in a text. This design feature suggests that the sign producer considers the words as an important communicator of meaning in the text.

Additional framing choices of a white background, shown in Figure 3.16, are used to segregate visual semiotic resources from each other. That is, the text begins with words functioning to instruct; a story component is then offered by both visual semiotic resources, led by the picture and followed by words. The prompt then offers further instructions related to the task using the linguistic semiotic separated by saturated green frames. Yet, while pictures are solid frames within the text separate words from pictures, two outer opaque green and blue frames bind the linguistic and non–linguistic information together inter–semiotically acting in complementarity.

The layout of the picture aspect in the prompt places the cracking egg as the central pivotal point within a coloured frame drawing the viewer's attention to the image. Positioning the egg in the centre brings it into prominence. How pictures in other prompts were placed to enable the representational and interactional meaning was considered when I analysed the writing prompts used in this study.

While my analysis focussed on the non–linguistic component of the text, I also refer to inter–semiotic relations in general terms acknowledging that both visual semiotic resources play a role in prompting a story. That is, the words and picture act in a cooperative fashion as explained by the following excerpt that accompanied the picture of a cracking egg - "*As I squatted down for a closer look, a little dark hole appeared, with cracks running in all directions. The egg was hatching!*" Notable in this example is that the words tell more about the role of the viewer and the complicating action than is shown in the picture. The words also offer information about the contents of the egg explaining that the egg was *"making strange noises."*

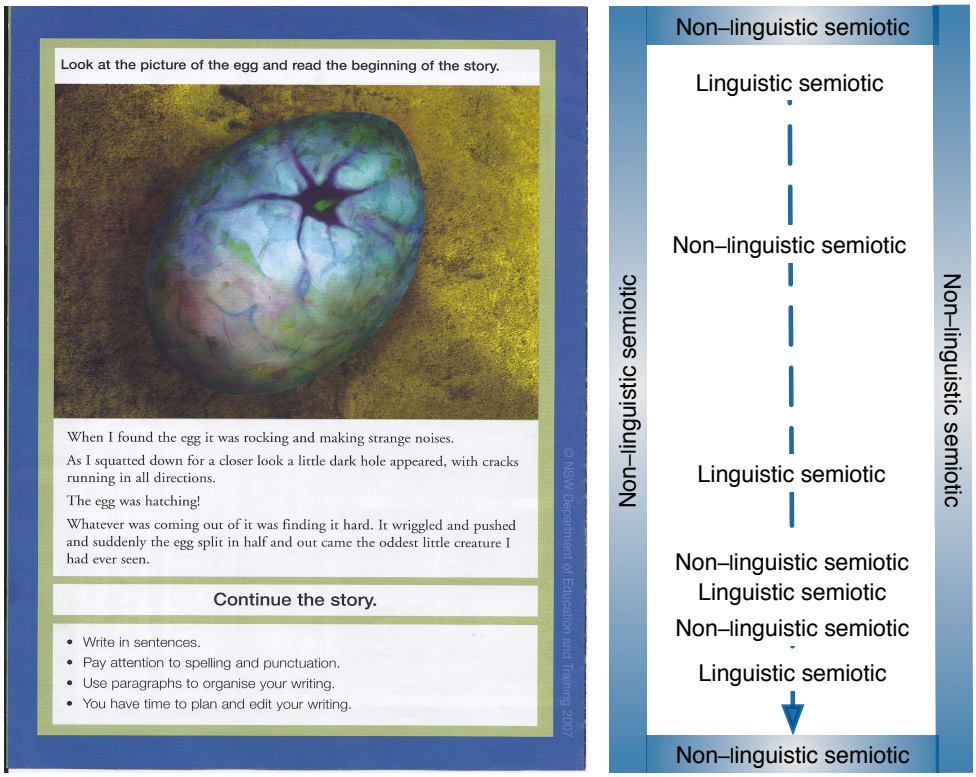


FIGURE 3.17: Descending alternating layout design

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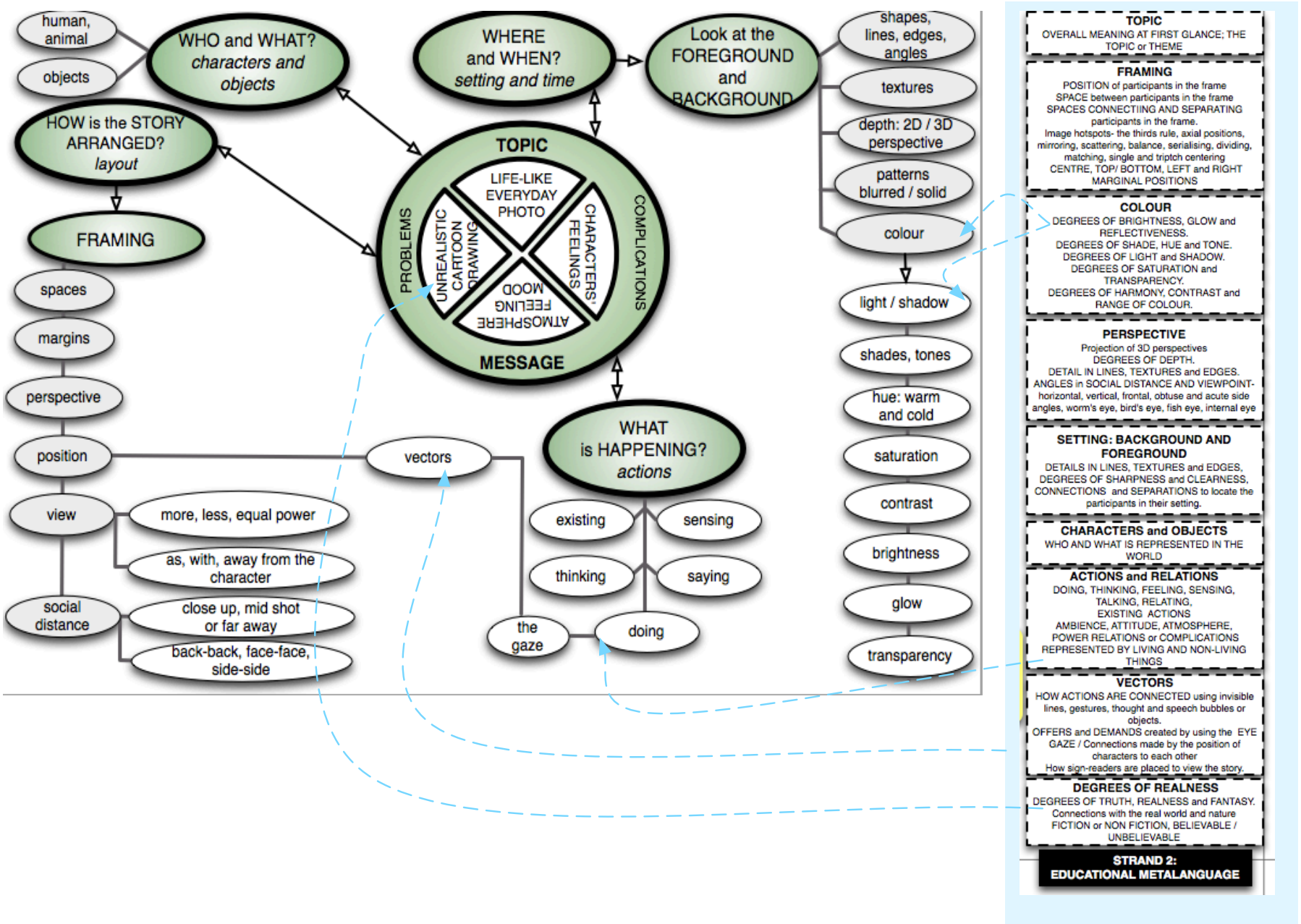
While my analysis focussed on the non–linguistic component of the text, I also refer to inter–semiotic relations in general terms acknowledging that both visual semiotic resources play a role in prompting a story. That is, the words and picture act in a cooperative fashion as explained by the following excerpt that accompanied the picture of a cracking egg - "*As I squatted down for a closer look, a little dark hole appeared, with cracks running in all directions. The egg was hatching!*" Notable in this example is that the words tell more about the role of the viewer and the complicating action than is shown in the picture. The words also offer information about the contents of the egg explaining that the egg was *"making strange noises."* The words also build on the complicating phase shown by explaining, *"Suddenly the egg split in half and out came the strangest little creature I had ever seen."* In this instance both the words and pictures contributed to the narrative stimulus requiring a transductive task involving interpreting both visual semiotics, which, in an assessment context, would then require participants in a further transductive move when translating their ideas into prose. The remaining writing prompts are analysed utilising this framework in Appendices B-F).

3.4. The Educational Scaffold

The other direction I took using the *Conceptual Matrix* was to recontextualise theoretical terms and concepts for pedagogical purposes. Using Strand Two of the *Conceptual Matrix* labelled 'The Educational Metalanguage', I developed an *Educational Scaffold* for my use when talking with the students about visual prompts during the intervention phase of this study. The *Educational Scaffold* (Figure 3.18 and Figure 6.10) was designed as a visual network presented on an A3 sized page.

The design of the scaffold was influenced by fundamental aspects of narrative involving characters (agents) and agency (actions) and the relations between characters during the events were considered as essential to the organisation of the design because talking about narrative includes who is involved, what is going on, when and where event take place and what might happen next in a story. As highlighted in Figure 3.17, the visual categories and elements from Strand Two of the *Conceptual Matrix* were linked with these overarching narrative questions.



3.18: Evolution of the Educational Scaffold from Strand Two of the Conceptual Matrix

3.5 In summary

This chapter has examined, in some detail, the development of a *Conceptual Matrix* for making sense of the wide range of visual elements for reading the picture aspect in large–scale writing assessments such as the BST and NAPLAN. From this matrix two resources evolved: an *Analytical Framework* as a tool for analysis and an *Educational Scaffold* for constructing a theoretically motivated metalanguage for talking with students about single narrative pictures used as stimulus for composing.

As with all the writing assessment prompts examined in this study, the visual narratives were not depicted as a series of pictures as in picture books creating logical relations as the story unfolded in text–time (Painter 2007, p. 49). Rather single 'snapshots' from a story aspect were provided requiring students to respond to:

- A glimpse of a narrative phase, stage or a number of phases, (DET 2009; 2007; 2005) or,
- A selection of single pictures reflecting a number of different representational and interactional meanings from different stories as stimulus (ACARA 2010; DET 2008).

O'Halloran (2008) argues that narratives presented with a single image can leave logical relations open to interpretation. I utilised *the Analytical Framework* to identify what story aspects were made available in the single images used in past BST and NAPLAN narrative writing assessment prompts over the past decade. I would argue that the transductive process involved in analysing possible meaning potentials in a single image for composing a narrative is a complex transductive task. Chapter four discusses my analyses of the writing assessment prompts used in this study as preparation for examining how students undertook this process and how they worked through the transductive task of translating a non–linguistic visual semiotic for composing.

Chapter four

An analysis of visual writing prompts – BST to NAPLAN

The examination of visual writing assessment prompts from a ten–year period has provided a contemporary reference for identifying commonalities and differences in the types of prompts presented to students. A key concern warranting investigation is the change from providing different visual prompts to primary and secondary students in state based Basic Skills narrative writing assessments, to one during the period since 2008 with the NAPLAN writing task with a shared stimulus for both primary and secondary students. Investigating the changes in prompt design is critical at a time when these tests are now implemented across a diverse student cohort and results affect students, schools and curriculum (Wu 2007; Elwood 2012). My study is relevant in building on an existing body of research into the usefulness of image in standardised literacy assessments. A study by Gazella and Stockman (2003) found that while test developers use pictures believing visual input is helpful, the use of pictures as stimulus for retelling narrative did not necessarily improve language performance. Gazella and Stockman's study's (2003) also raises questions about the efficacy of story task procedures for language screening assessments. Other research claims that the inclusion of image in standardised Basic Skills reading comprehension assessments can add to item descriptor complexity (Unsworth & Chan 2008) with earlier research finding that use of a visual stimulus can depress performance relative to auditory–only stimulus for retelling oral narratives (Pratt & Mackenzie-Keating 1985).

I would argue that, as a consequence of my analysis, what became apparent were the ways in which the prompts significantly changed over time and the differences between the representational, interactional and compositional functions of the BST writing prompts compared to those in NAPLAN. These changes may impact on student performance within and across the years. I am not suggesting the use of image in writing assessments is inappropriate rather that reading meaning potentials from image may not be a natural, simple or a universal skill shared by all participants. Scholarly work argues that 'a literate eye' is critical for reading the increasingly complex combinations of words and pictures (Eisner 2002; Gibson & Ewing 2011). Moreover, it is argued that these skills impact on how students read image and interpret meaning potentials in assessments (Brice Heath 2000). This view is supported by studies that

indicate positive results for reading image when visual arts is integrated into writing lessons (Anrezejczak, Trainin & Poldberg 2005; Eisner 2002). From this perspective, I suggest that students without these learning experiences may be disadvantaged in large scale writing assessments using image as a stimulus for composing.

The focus of this chapter is on discussing these changes in view of the semiotic expectations required of primary school students and that limited skills in translating meaning from predominantly image based prompts is likely to impact students' effective use of this resource as a stimulus for compositional writing.

The changes predominantly focus on the move away from a literary narrative style narrative in BST to poster–like medleys that include a mixture of different narrative tropes in the NAPLAN requiring different ways for reading the stimulus. Arbitrary changes from everyday characters, events and complications to abstract representations depicting less familiar topics occur from year to year. Degrees of interactional connections also transpire within and across prompts with viewers engaging in varying personal contact and power relations with characters and events enabled through complex vectors and compositional designs. Each of these changes is now discussed in detail.

4.1. Changes in topics and representational meaning

The first most obvious change was from the use of storybook topics in the state based Basic Skills prompts to the depiction of contemporary issues and content specific topics in the National Writing Assessments. The Basic Skills used pictures and plots from familiar picture books that many primary aged students would have encountered. For example, the topic from the 2000 BST writing prompt 'Rosie' (Figure 4.1) centres on a monster directly taken from a picture book recommended for 5–9 year olds, 'Rosie, the night fright monster,' by Susan King (1994).

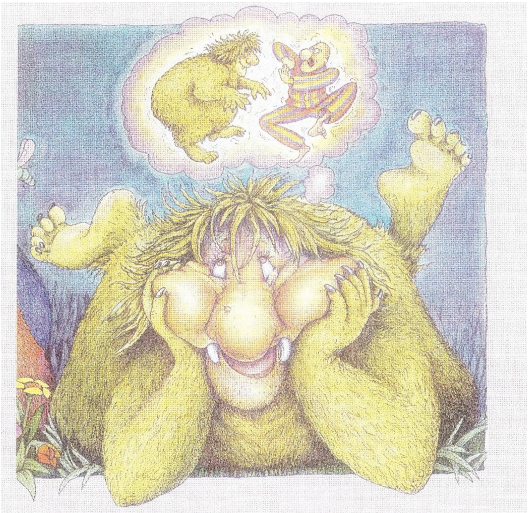


FIGURE 4.1: Use of a literary picture book in the 2000 BST writing prompt

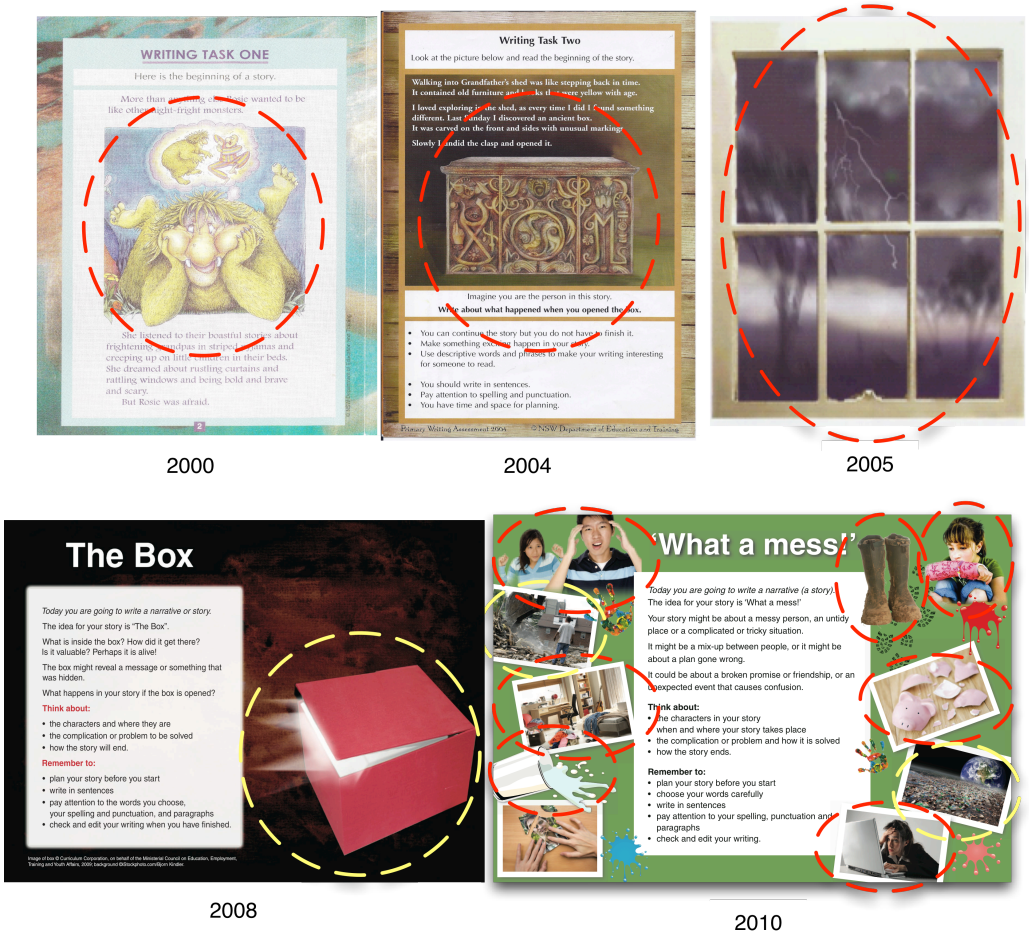
This character re–emerged from earlier BST reading comprehension assessments (DET 1995), where extracts from the same picture book were included in the stem questions. Likewise, the 2004 BST writing prompt 'The Ancient Box', in Figure 4.2 features an exotic object and location similar to the central object and setting used in the literary picture book 'Grandad's Gifts' by Paul Jennings (1992). Students more familiar with those types of pictures and narrative tales from popular children's picture books were well positioned for engaging with these writing assessment prompts.

FIGURE 4.2: Literary imitating topic used in 2004 BST writing prompt'

In contrast, there is a notable absence of direct references to familiar children's picture books in NAPLAN writing prompts (ACARA 2010; 2009; DET 2008). Topics ranging from contemporary issues surrounding sustainability and global issues such as inter planet pollution were depicted. While, it could be argued the absence of particular literary influences is more equitable, other challenges for younger students come to the fore. These biases are discussed in the following sections.

4.2. Narrative representational changes

Changes in the depiction of characters, events, actions, and the places where the actions take place each year. What is notable is that the resurgence of literary type storylines and characters that occurred in the BST, changes with the implementation of NAPLAN to less predicable narrative representations including a wider range of happenings from acts of nature, everyday lived spaces and experiences, to more abstract, thematic or specialist occurrences such as investigative work or urbanisation. As Illustrated in Figure 4.3, the varying degrees of life–replicating narrative components depicted across the years are highlighted.



2000 2004 2005

2008 2010

FIGURE 4.3: Various characters, objects and actions depicted in various prompts

The range in the depiction of the abstract to the everyday widens with the introduction of NAPLAN. For example, the 2009 NAPLAN prompt depicted a hyper–real red box removed from a locative setting indicating a highly abstract image. In contrast, the 2010 NAPLAN, 'What a Mess!' portrayed life replicating participants, objects and

complications. In this prompt, character representations included, but were not limited to, a primary–aged child with a broken arm, muddy boots and prints, a glass of spilt milk and a broken moneybox. Within this same prompt, everyday settings and events such as a frustrated teenager at her computer and a messy bedroom were also represented. In addition to these everyday depictions, more specialised locations from particular contexts and actions were depicted such as the photograph of an urban setting with a building demolition in progress and a polluted planet (Figure 4.4).

FIGURE 4.4: Contemporary actions and issues depicted in 'What a Mess!'

In this instance, context–bound and general everyday experiences co–exist on the same narrative prompt page. While the logic to include multiple story options suggests the sign–producer is offering greater choice for students, unfamiliarity with the range of topics and difficulty interpreting these representations may interfere with students' interpretative process, thus increasing the complexity of the task.

Investigation of the prompts also indicated that the choice of characters, settings and actions across the prompts seemed arbitrary from year to year, offering differing narrative tropes and thus stimulating different types of stories: some everyday, others from an imaginary world. I would argue that the narrative entities provided in the picture guide students' selection of the characters, setting, conflicts and resolutions that they write about. For instance, everyday characters and ordinary events such as those

depicted in the 2010 NAPLAN prompt including a messy bedroom or split milk may evoke similar everyday complications of personal experience in students' compositions. These types of narratives, while valid, are less valued in the NAPLAN marking criterion than more thematic and imaginary narratives including "psychological subjects and unexpected topics" (MCEETYA 2008, p. 8). I would argue that the type of story components used in the pictures play a significant role in shaping the type of narrative students compose, influencing their assessment outcomes from year to year.

Perhaps the intent of providing a number of narrative tropes in more recent NAPLAN prompts around a theme such as in 'Found' or 'What a Mess!' is to counteract limited student experience. However, merely offering more choice may add to the complexity of the prompt because more time may be required to puzzle out the unfamiliar and undertake the transductive process. The effectiveness of the design in later NAPLAN prompts is argued later in the chapter and again foregrounded during the analyses of students' responses in chapter five.

4.3. Enacting social relations

The examination of the types of processes between characters in the prompts identified a wide variety and unpredictability in the social distance and connections enacted each year. These unpredictable changes attribute different feelings about the characters and mood about what is going on in the pictures thus shaping students' responses.

For the purpose of this section narrative processes are revisited, in order to discuss the different types of personal connections offered to students in the writing prompts over the years. These processes involve characters in actions and reactions which can be active or passive, transactional or non-transactional, or, where thought bubbles are used, mental. Less dominant in the narrative prompts are conceptual processes. As explained in chapter two, these types of processes are more dominant in informational texts. However they are occasionally used in later NAPLAN narrative writing prompts.

Notable is the unpredictability and degrees of complexity in what and how these processes are enacted. That is, in some years a passive non–transactional action process was enacted such as illustrated in the following prompt (Figure 4.5). In this instance, the action is a non–transactional process because the light is just shining out of the box but not to or at something.

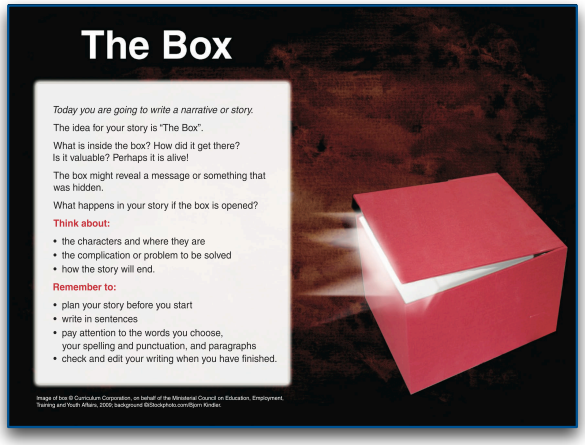
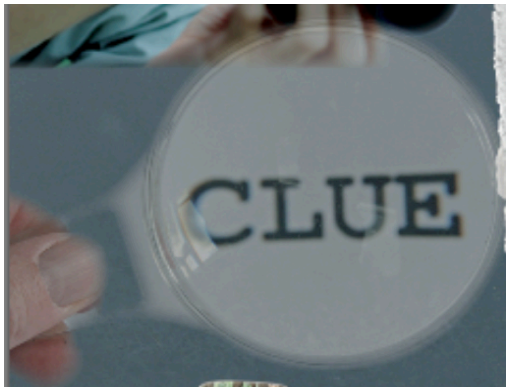


FIGURE 4.5: A non-transactional action process

As identified in chapter two, there are examples where viewers are more involved in the event taking place in the non–linguistic visual narrative. Painter (2012) argues these types of pictures place viewers in a default position suggesting the sign–reader is a character taking part in the story action. Examples of this type of contact are illustrated in Figure 4.6. These types of processes are described as mediated views and enact closer personal relations with the visual narrative. The first picture in Figure 4.6 shows part of a hand holding a magnifying glass. The sign-reader is placed in a position that suggests the hand in the picture belongs to them and they are actually holding the magnifying glass, thus taking part as a character in the story rather than as an observer of the action. The second example orientates the sign-reader the same way or suggests the viewer is looking over the shoulder of the participant in the narrative. Closer relations between the character and the sign-reader are created in these instances by involving the viewer as a mediated participant in the story (Painter 2012).



NAPLAN 2008 writing prompt
'Found'

NAPLAN 2010 writing prompt
'What a Mess!'

FIGURE 4.6: Examples of a mediated view used in writing prompts

Several writing prompts omit visible characters leaving the sign–reader distanced from close intimacy with the event. These types of views are referred to as an unmediated passive transactional process. It is argued that these types of viewpoints encourage appreciative rather than an empathetic stance towards the visual content (Painter 2012). The non–linguistic visual component in the prompts are dominated by this unmediated default view. However when combined with other visual elements such as social distance, various relations are enacted. For example, as illustrated in Figure 4.7, positioning a sign–reader in an unmediated view at a long shot distance keeps them more detached from the event that is taking place.

BST 2004 writing prompt
'Storm'

NAPLAN 2010 writing prompt
'What a Mess!'

FIGURE 4.7: Examples of unmediated long distance shots used in prompts

Alternatively, as shown in Figure 4.8, when the unmediated default view is combined with a closer social distance view, a more intimate connection is made between the viewer and the event that is taking place in the image.

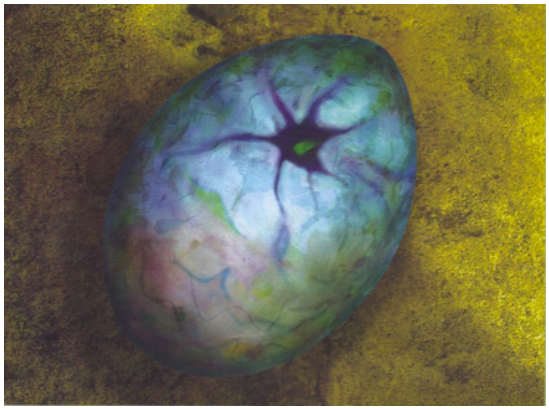


FIGURE 4.8: An example of unmediated close up distance

Other prompts represent characters making contact with each other in the picture through eye contact 'a gaze' such as that illustrated in Figure 4.9 (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006). In this instance, two different types of eye contact are used to connect characters with each other. The first gaze involves the main character Rosie as she glances up to the thought bubble above her head. In this instance, Rosie connects with characters through a mental process. While mental processes are more common in cartoon strips, this writing prompt enacts personal relations by depicting a reactional process such as this. The gaze is not as demanding as others because it is a unidirectional interaction. That is, the characters in the thought bubble are not engaging with Rosie in her 'lived environment' or with the sign–reader.

The second reactional process in this prompt involving a gaze is the relation between the two characters in the thought bubble. This gaze is more demanding than the previous example discussed as the characters are looking directly at each other. Because of this type of connection, the process is described as bi–directional and depicts a close interaction between the monster and the old man. While both these examples use different types of gazes, neither involves the sign–reader in direct eye contact with the characters in the visual narrative thus leaving them as a more detached observer to the events going on.

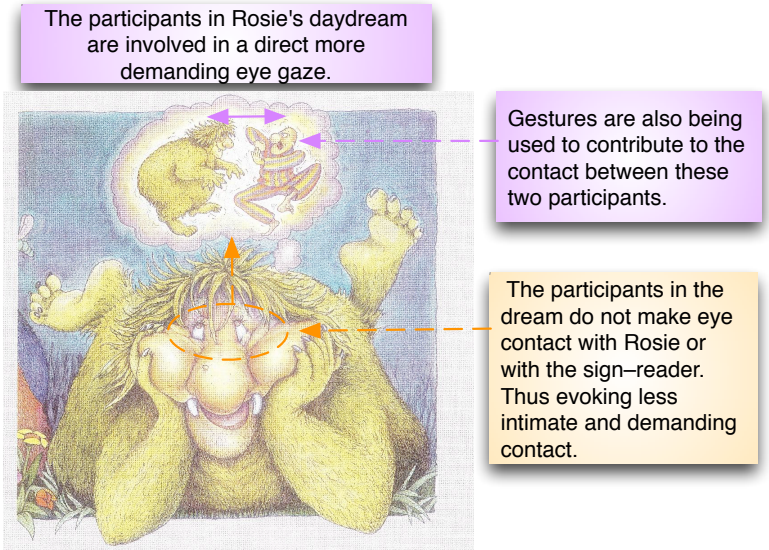


FIGURE 4.9: Various degrees of demand offered by reactional processes

Other NAPLAN writing prompts involving 'the gaze' also leaves viewers as observers of the narrative. Generally, in NAPLAN writing prompts with multiple pictures, narratives are cropped leaving sign–readers unable to see all that is happening thus enacting

passive reactional gazes. This type of eye contact is non–transactional, leaving the sign–reader to imagine who or what the participants in the picture are looking at. Examples such as these are shown in Figure 4.10. In these instances participants are looking from a side–ways or offset gaze and not looking directly at sign–readers. These choices leave viewers more emotionally detached and less closely involved with the characters in the story.

FIGURE 4.10: The use of an offset gaze in 'Found' (2008) and 'What a Mess! (2010)

It is argued that a direct gaze between characters and viewers enacts the closest interactive relations, demanding the most from viewers (Painter & Martin 2012; Bell 2010). Considering this viewpoint, it is important to note that this type of demanding social connection only appears once in the selection of writing assessment prompts gathered for analysis. This single example appears as one of the pictures in the 2010 NAPLAN writing prompt 'What a Mess!' and is illustrated below in Figure 4.11.

FIGURE 4.11: The direct gaze – demanding eye contact

The value of investigating the prompts over the ten years provided base data to indicate that varying interactional relations are offered to students each year in the writing assessment. Because different interpersonal relations are likely to generate different responses, understanding how students respond to the different interactions made available is critical if different pictures from year to year enact varying connections between characters and with viewers. NAPLAN considers "characterisation as an essential component of effective narrative" (MCETYA 2008, p9), therefore more distant pictures evoking less interpersonal connections may impact the characterisation and themes portrayed by students in their subsequent compositions. I would argue that the interactive relations enacted in the visual prompts may skew how students connect interpersonally with the visual content and the types of stories they compose.

4.4. Variations in realism

The subjectivity about what is considered believable or real, needs to be taken into account as a factor influencing how students respond to the narrative representations and the types of stories they compose using the stimulus. There was evidence of shifts in the degree of realism depicted in the prompts across the years. In particular there was an increase in the use of photographic pictures in later writing prompts (ACARA 2010; DET 2008). For example, the earlier BST writing prompt 'Rosie' (DET 2000) features a sketched 'night fright monster'. In contrast, the later NAPLAN prompt 'What a Mess' (ACARA 2010) contains eleven possible different visual story starters where nine of these images are photographs of objects and settings. Jewitt and Oyama (2010, p 151) argue that photographs are often thought of as "images of the real" because they reflect the reality of what is seen with the naked eye. Representing narrative using these types of effects can evoke a higher degree of realism about the story, thus bringing the abstract or imaginary into the real world.

Still photography was not the only effect used to infer 'realness' or naturalism in the writing prompts. In the 2000 writing prompt 'Rosie' and again in the 2004 writing prompt 'The Ancient Box,' the stimulus depicted sketches similar to those used in picture books and cartoons. However, the use of life–replicating colours and lines also assisted in imitating the detail attributed to objects in a natural world suggesting realness about the characters and events depicted. Added detail provided by other

visual elements such as the use of shadow in the 'Ancient Box created a sense of natural light thus replicating the natural environment.

Likewise, the use of lines was used in a number of prompts to evoke a sense of the imagined to otherwise naturally occurring events. For example, as illustrated in the egg prompt in Figure 4.12, the object is cracking. However, unlike the photo of the egg provided, the use of curved and blurred lines in 'The Egg' prompt implies a sense of fantasy or science fiction about the happening because in the natural world cracking eggs are depicted with sharp angular lines and shapes. Thus, the use of lines and shapes in this instance locates a realistic event in the imaginary world.

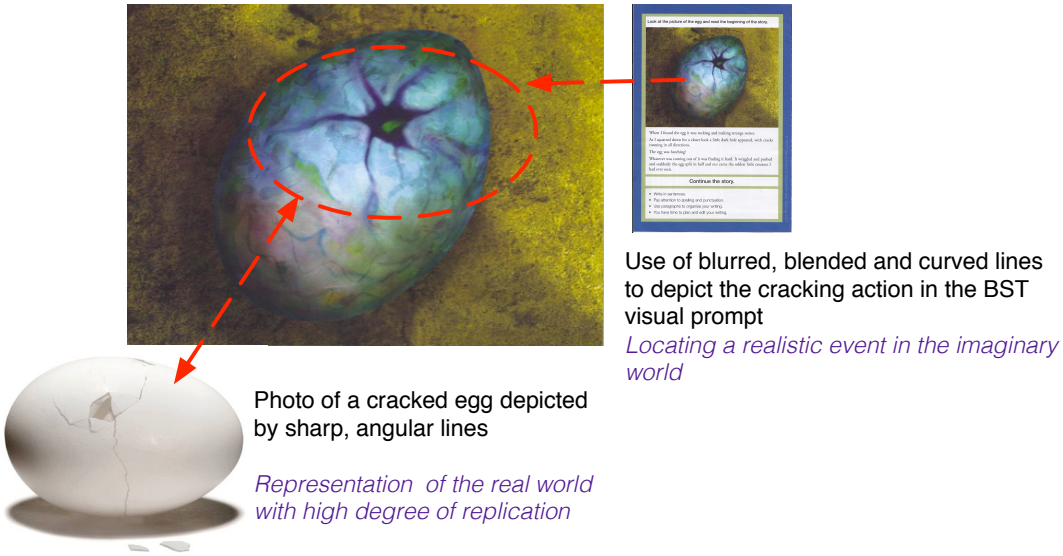


FIGURE 4.12: Use of line to depict a degree of abstraction from the real world

With the significant change in prompt design with the implementation of NAPLAN, varying degrees of abstraction are realised in the one prompt. The 2010 NAPLAN writing prompt 'What a Mess!' is one such example. This prompt uses highly detailed life–imitating pictures using photography such as that used to depict a bedroom scene. However, in the same prompt, unmodulated saturated colour, simplified shapes and lines are used to depict possible everyday objects and actions such as the spilling glass of milk, paint splashes and muddy footprints. In doing so, the degree of 'realness' about these objects and events is reduced despite the high possibility of these actions occurring in the real world. Using varying degrees of replicating the natural world in one prompt may increase the degree of difficulty interpreting the images for novice readers. Investigating how degrees of realism is important to consider because student participants may respond differently to varying degrees of

realism which impact on the ideas they generate. For some, life–like representations with increased detail may not always be easier to understand, as there is more to interpret. Current research into images used in reading comprehension and literacy assessments expresses a similar argument that realistic pictures containing additional detail and increased salience of important features provided by the words that can add complexity to the question (Brice Heath 2000; Chan & O'Donnell 2008; Eisner 2002).

On the other hand, removing detail can also add difficulty to a task for some students. Minimal detail, line and shape can remove an object from a locative setting thus further decontextualising the object from the 'real world' into the imaginary. Decreased contextualisation from the real world can also potentially increase the difficulty of interpretation because there is less to grab onto, and the less likely something familiar will be identified. For as Halliday argues,

> In all educational settings, learners are being required to predict both ways: to predict the text from the context, and to predict the context from the text. But it can be very demanding, especially when too much of the total pattern is unfamiliar (Halliday 1999, p 22).

4.5. Changes in quantity of representational meanings

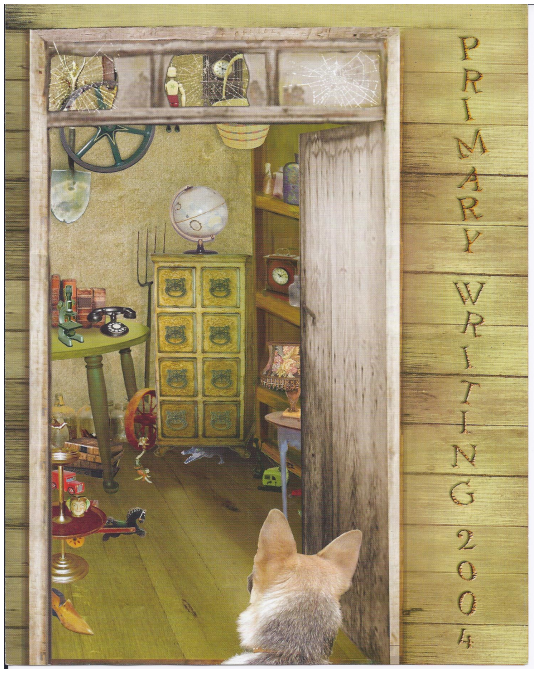
The majority of the selected writing prompts offer one central topic as a stimulus for writing (ACARA 2009; DET 2007; 2005; 2000). For instance, the 2000 BST writing prompt 'Rosie' offers a single picture about a night–fright monster's dilemma. Later writing prompts such as the 2005 prompt 'The Egg' and the 2007 BST prompt 'The Storm' again offer a single object in the visual stimulus for composing. However, a significant shift in the quantity of representational meaning potentials made available in the non–linguistic visual component occurred with the introduction of NAPLAN in 2008. More often than not, as Figure 4.13 illustrates, these later prompts offered a number of storylines around a central topic.

Prompts with multiple pictures are more complex by the mere nature of the amount of content offered in and across the non–linguistic visual semiotic. The increased meaning potentials available add to the complexity of the text to be interpreted in terms of distinguishing those pictures central to the story and those included as peripheral.

FIGURE 4.13: Multiple narrative representations in the 2008 NAPLAN prompt

In contrast to the prompt design in the above NAPLAN example, earlier BST prompts show additional visual potential meaning for a single story trope. The first example illustrating this point is demonstrated in Figure 4.14.

Front cover of the writing prompt



Back page of the writing prompt

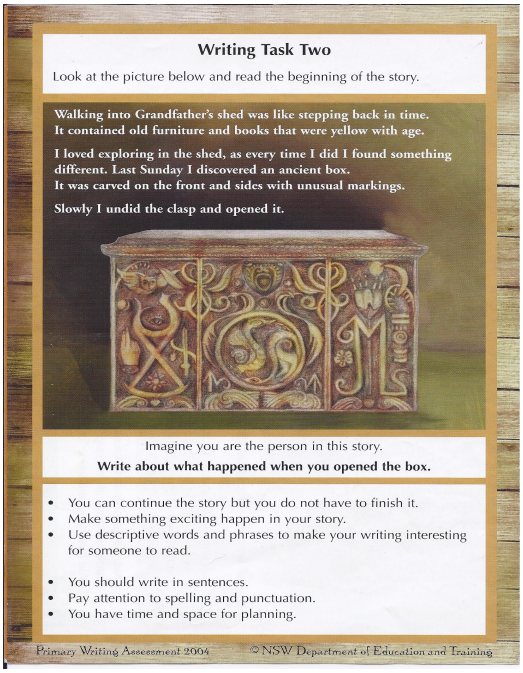


FIGURE 4.14: Potential meaning provided in the 2004 BST prompt

In this instance, the picture for the narrative writing task is positioned on the back page of the assessment booklet, connecting representationally with the picture on the front cover, which shows the opening of doorway of the grandfather's shed in the text. The

probability that the non–linguistic semiotic resource on the front cover and on the last page would be read in an unfolded view during the writing assessment is unlikely and not laboured here. However, the point made is that if the viewer connected the picture on the front cover with the visual narrative representation on the back page, additional potential meaning is made available for their story offering substantial visual setting for one storyline.

The same style of presentation is used in the 2007 assessment task 'The Egg'. By comparing the front cover and back page of this prompt, a sense of real time in narrative is achieved. As illustrated in Figure 4.15, the picture of the egg on the front page infers a dormant phase of an egg life cycle where the egg is in a metamorphic state. In this instance, combining the visual images offers more about an impending complication for one storyline. That is, when this object is re–introduced on the back page, the picture offers additional meaning potential by including the action of the egg cracking. If students combine the experiential meaning from the two pictures, a sequence of events is presented where an egg in a metamorphic state on the front cover begins to crack with daylight approaching thus depicting a logical narrative sequence.

Front page of the assessment booklet presenting the writing assessment

Back page of the assessment booklet presenting the narrative writing task

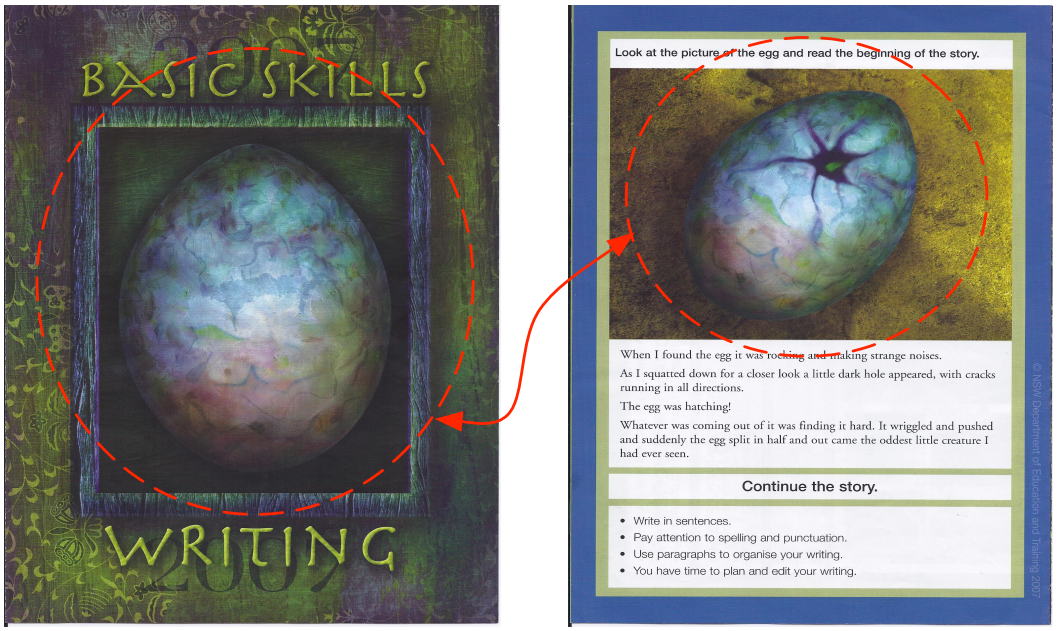


FIGURE 4.15: Additional meaning potential represented

While it seems that much may depend on students' metasemiotic practices in order to link these ideas together, more is offered for students around one storyline in terms of setting, characters and complications than in later NAPLAN prompts. Exploring how students identified and engaged with compositional functions of this type of arrangement was important in order to examine how students capitalise on a wider range of meaning potentials made available.

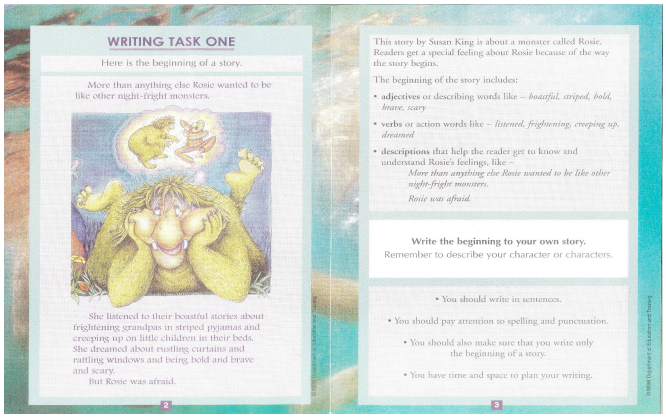
4.6. Compositional changes

Analyses of the prompts over the ten–year period revealed significant changes in the way narrative representations were organised on the assessment prompt page with the beginning of NAPLAN. Because the compositional function of an image enables representational and interactive meaning to be realised, changes in the design aspect of the writing assessment prompts impacts how participants are depicted; happenings are enacted; interactions communicated; and details accompanying these meanings are organised on the prompt page. Data analyses dealing with how the content was organised revealed changes involving orientation, framing, proximity and spatial relations. These changes are now discussed using demonstrative exemplars from the visual semiotic resources.

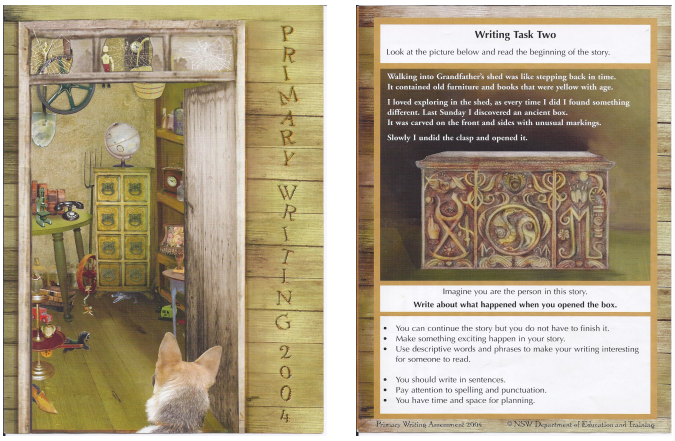
In all BST writing prompts analysed, students were required to compose two different types of texts presented as part of an A4 sized portrait-orientated booklet. The BST prompts were orientated in portrait format with one of the two tasks consistently requiring students to write a narrative. As Figure 4.16 illustrates, the booklet format was used across the BST prompts with occasional variations in the position of the narrative task within the booklets. That is, in some years, the narrative writing prompt was the first of the two writing tasks appearing on the inside cover and in other years the narrative task appeared on the back page as the last of the two writing tasks.

For example, as Figure 4.16 shows, in the year 2000, the BST narrative writing prompt 'Rosie' was positioned in the centre of an A4 booklet, taking up both sides labelled as pages two and three. This is the only prompt from the selection in this study which positions the narrative task as a double page spread. Later BST writing prompts such as the 2004 BST prompt 'The Ancient Box' and '2007 BST prompt The Egg' are positioned on the back page of a four-page A4 booklet with the front cover depicting a picture related to the narrative writing task (Figure 4.17). Irrespective of the position of

the task in the booklet, the prompt presents information in a linear pattern from top to bottom.



Inside double page spread of the A4 assessment booklet from the BST 2000 writing prompt 'Rosie.'



The front and back cover of the A4 assessment booklet from the BST 2004 writing prompt 'The Ancient Box.'

FIGURE 4.16: Positional changes in the BST prompt

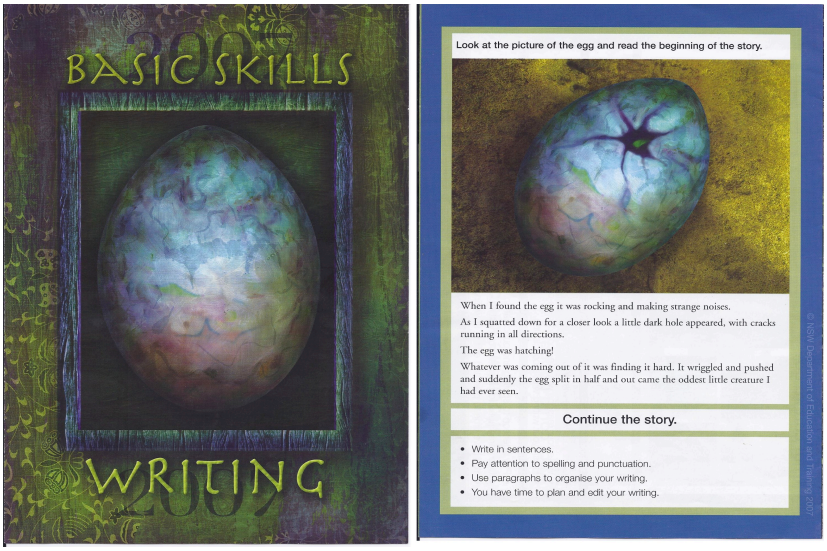


FIGURE 4.17: Position of the narrative writing task within the A4 booklet

Unlike the BST writing prompts that contain a pair of writing tasks, as shown in Figure 4.18, the NAPLAN writing prompts are presented on a single A4 landscape page with

narrative as the sole writing task in the assessment. These changes in positioning and orientation of the NAPLAN writing task are accompanied by other design shifts in framing, scale, proximity and spatial relations. These arguably reflect the move towards “a new literacy, based on images and visual design” (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006, p 17). While Walsh (2010) argues that students adapt quickly to the ‘radial type reading’ in this type of design when used on screen, understanding whether the same effect occurs in the writing prompts is important to consider because complexities in composition may increase the difficulty in reading this type of design over earlier picture book designs used in the BST prompts.

According to Painter and Martin, framing brings different elements to the fore within the total composition providing different “windows into the story” for viewers (2012, p8). The writing prompts in my study showed a significant shift in how visual semiotic resources are framed on the assessment prompt page. I argue that the use of different framing changes how students connect the visual resources on the prompt page, acknowledging both the opportunities and demands of this design as a factor shaping students’ responses. This section outlines the similarities in framing used in BST and compares these to those in the NAPLAN prompts.

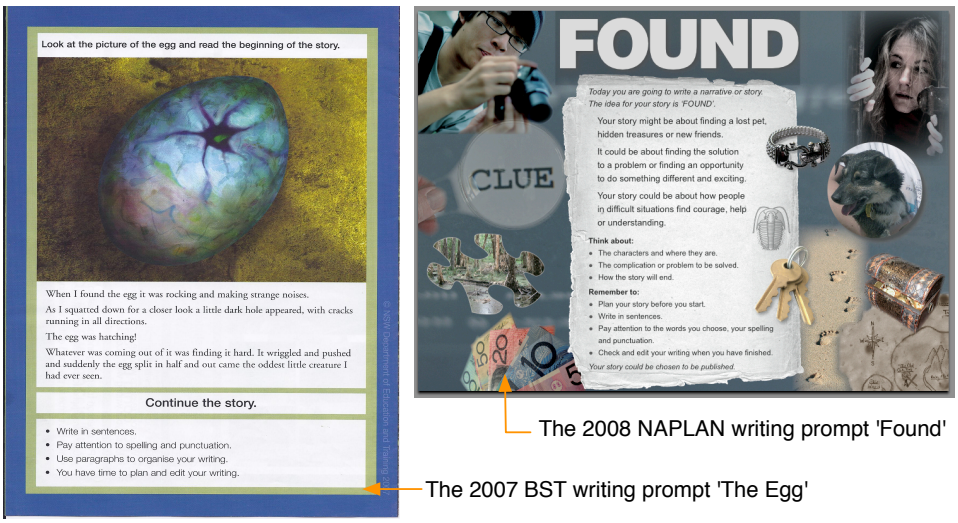


FIGURE 4.18: Orientation of BST and NAPLAN writing prompts

The first significant framing shift is the use of margins in the total composition. Common to all the BST prompts is the use of margins as a textual cohesive device. The following prompt in Figures 4.19 is an example of the use of margins separating and combining image and verbiage in a text. In this instance, opaque green margins separate different blocks of information within the text. In this prompt, each of the

separated blocks of information is then held together as a whole by an outer coloured margin creating a complete text. This framing device suggests each section is required to construe the total meaning of the prompt.

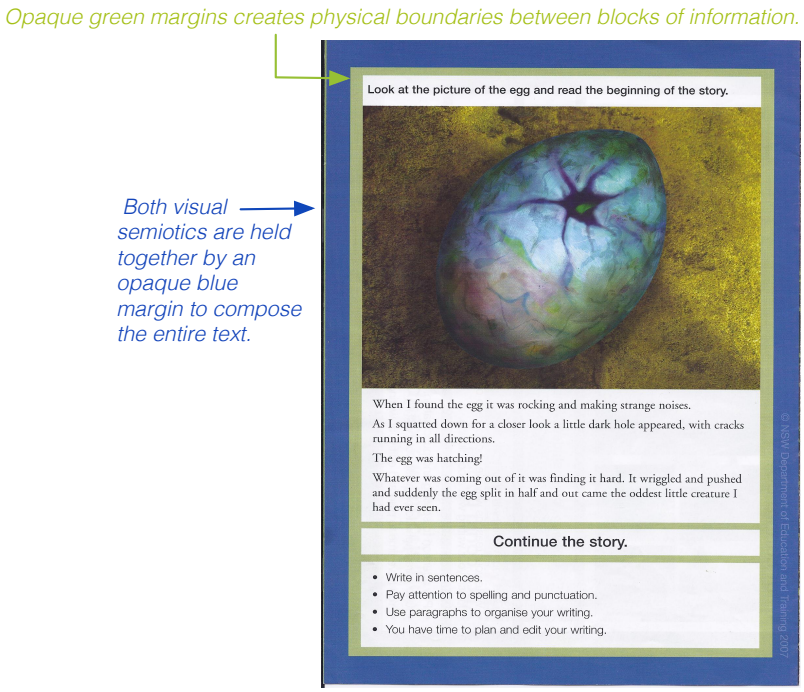


FIGURE 4.19: Ambient coloured margin as a framing device in the 2007 BST prompt

In addition to the use of coloured margins, some BST prompts offer representational meaning through the use of coloured image margins. This technique extends the non–linguistic semiotic bringing it into prominence within the text (Figures 4.20 and 4.21).

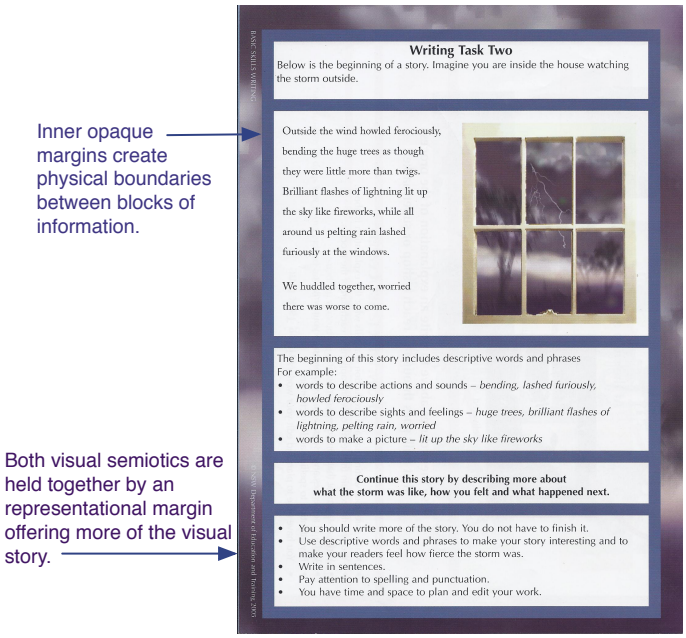
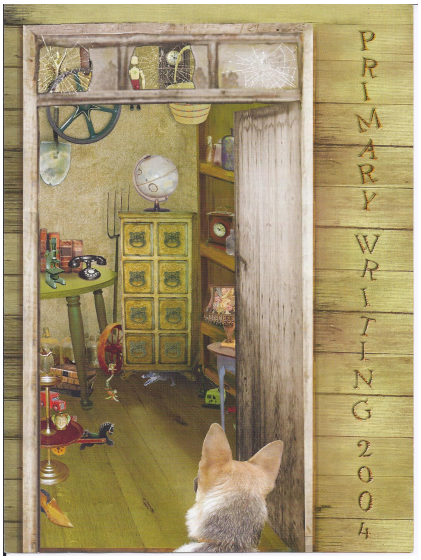


FIGURE 4.20: Representational margin as a framing device in the 2004 BST prompt

Front cover of the writing prompt



Back page of the writing prompt

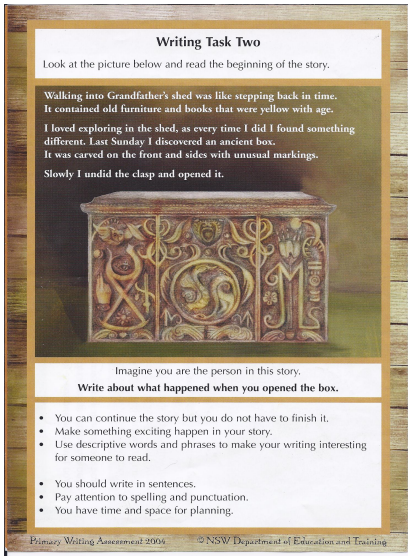


FIGURE 4.21: Experiential margins as a framing device in the 2005 BST prompt

Not all experiential margins in the BST writing prompts offer additional meaning relevant to the narrative writing task. In some instances, viewers need to recognise that the ideas depicted in the margin are unrelated to the narrative task. One example of this compositional feature is illustrated in Figure 4.22.

The opaque coloured frame creates internal separations between blocks of information from both visual semiotics.

The representational margin depicts an image unrelated to the narrative task.
The image in the margin relates to the other persuasive writing task on the back and front cover of the assessment booklet.

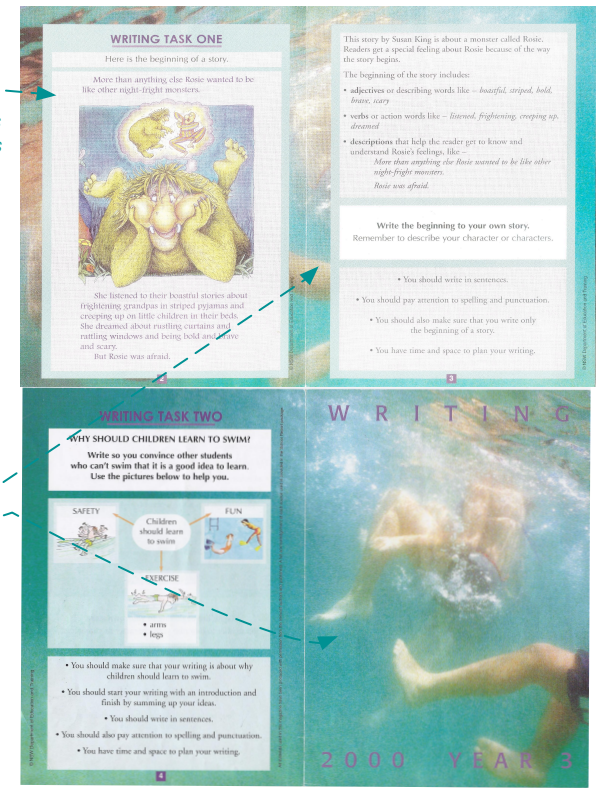
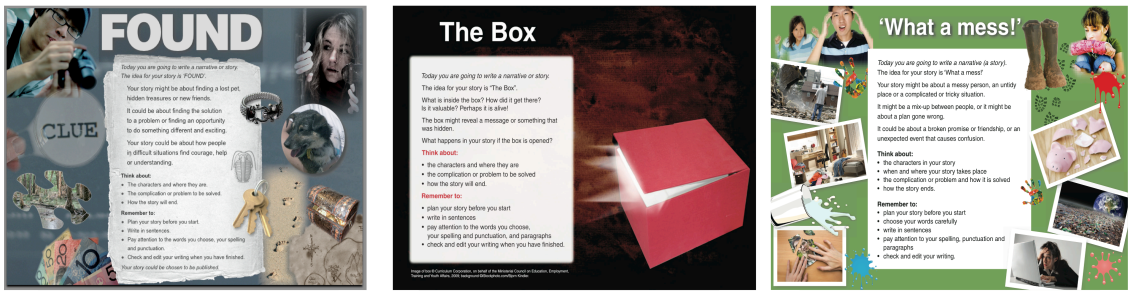


FIGURE 4.22: Unrelated experiential margins in the 2000 BST prompt

In this instance, while colour tones of blue and green in the image margin are used similarly to those in the picture of ‘Rosie’, the margin enclosing the prompt about a ‘night-fright monster’ depicts part of an underwater scene relating to the other persuasive writing task on the back page of the assessment booklet. In this case, the meaning depicted in the outer margin is a dangerous distraction from the narrative task. A prompt where the outer margin is unrelated to the story potentially creates additional complexity, as viewers need to decide whether intra–semiotic representations connect or disconnect with the writing stimulus. Despite the variances in the types of margins described here, margins are a textual feature common to the BST writing prompts. This framing device is consistently used to separate and connect information and suggests a linear sequence.

What is so interesting is the significant change between how ideas are framed in the BST prompts to the design used with the introduction of the NAPLAN writing assessment. As illustrated in Figures 4.23, outer frames used in the BST are replaced by a number of different elements impacting on how the visual semiotic resources are connected and disconnected on the page.



NAPLAN Writing Prompt
'Found' (DET 2008)

NAPLAN Writing Prompt
'The Box' (ACARA 2009)

NAPLAN Writing Prompt
'What a Mess' (ACARA 2010)

FIGURE 4.23: Framing devices used in the selected NAPLAN writing prompts

The omission of outer margins on the page is a framing device employed in all NAPLAN prompts. This technique allows the visual story to extend to the edge of the page. As illustrated in Figure 4.24, the prompt ‘Found’ demonstrates this framing device as linguistic and non–linguistic visual resources are integrated by the use of a coloured background. This technique is referred to as *‘subsuming’* pictures (Painter & Martin 2012). In this example, pictures such as a teenage boy, a wad of money and a silver bracelet are built onto or *‘subsumed’* onto the highly saturated blue–grey background. The same prompt also depicts pictures subsumed onto each other such

as a set of keys subsumed onto a picture of footprints in the sand, inferring some kind of relationship between these pictures.

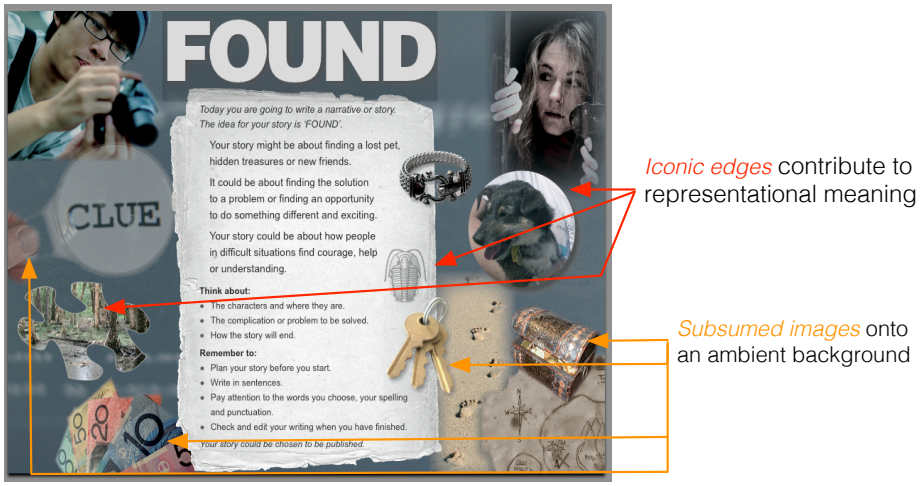


FIGURE 4.24: Framing devices used in the 2008 NAPLAN writing prompt

Without the consistent organisational structure of frames, subtle connections such as those enabled by position and proximity potentially add another layer of complexity for viewers of NAPLAN prompts because without physical separations between non–linguistic resources, it is no longer clear which pictures connect together. Knowledge about how to select from pictures placed in close proximity privileges viewers when responding to visual prompts adopted in the NAPLAN design. For example as highlighted from 'Found' in Figure 4.25, a teenage boy is using a camera posed to take a photo. The boy and the camera are connected as a circumstance of means. Offered here in this example is a central character – the boy, and specific tools that help to build the character and action as if props in a play such as the camera and backpack. In close proximity with some overlapping, a hand holding a magnifying glass positioned over the word "clue" is depicted. However the close proximity of the magnifying glass to the teenage boy and the camera he is holding does not necessarily suggest these two pictures are connected through circumstance of means. In this instance, viewers are required to connect the circumstance of means within one picture but disconnect these objects from other circumstantial objects despite their close proximity.

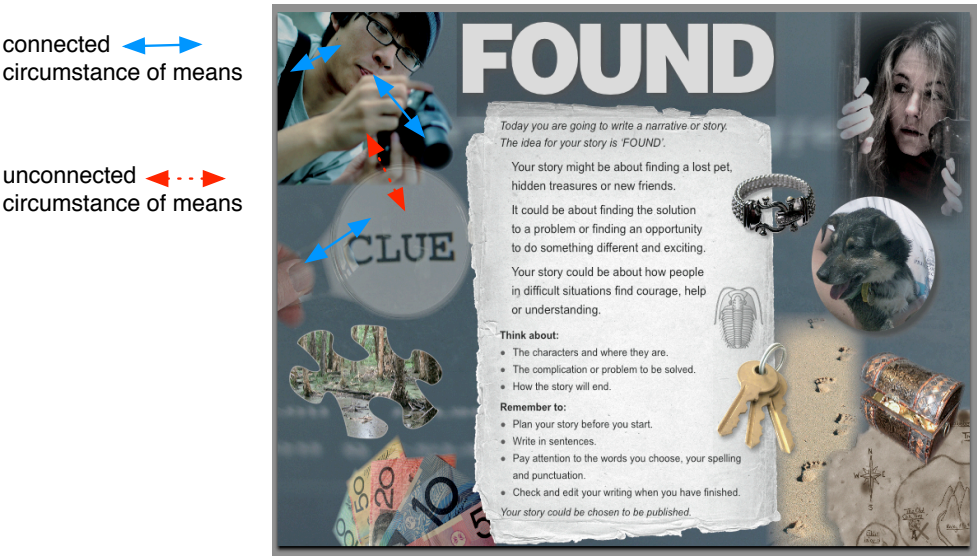


FIGURE 4.25: Connecting and disconnecting meaning potentials in the 2008 NAPLAN prompt

Along with proximity, the use of scale assists in enabling connections between participants when relating size from one object to another. This complexity appears to be directly linked with the increased number of narrative representations depicted in the space available on one A4 sized page. Objects, characters and locations of various unrelated scales coexist in order to 'fit' onto an A4 sized page. If students are to take full advantage of the possible multiple non–linguistic visual resources are used in one prompt, understanding about scale and knowing how to apply these general understandings as they make sense of the connections in and amongst pictures in each context would be of benefit. For example, in the 2010 NAPLAN prompt 'What a Mess!' some pictures appear as close–up shots and others at long–distance. This variation of scale within the one text does not necessarily imply that objects of similar size belong together such as the silver bracelet and the dog. Thus, apprentice viewers of NAPLAN writing prompts that use multiple pictures enabled by varying scale would benefit from knowledge about this element to make sense of the interactions and relations in the text.

Coinciding with changes in framing, proximity and scale, a significant change in spatial relations from those used in the BST and the NAPLAN was identified. Illustrated in Figure 4.26 rather than organising information in a lineal alternating sequence from top to bottom like that demonstrated in the BST prompts, visual semiotic resources in the NAPLAN prompts enable representational and interactive meaning through visual structures based on spatial relations.

NAPLAN 2009 prompt
'Found'

NAPLAN 2010 prompt
'What a Mess!'

FIGURE 4.26: Spatial arrangement of in NAPLAN writing prompts

The change from a lineal design to one based on spatial relations offered multiple entry points for reading the visual stimulus. Callow (2014; 2010) describes this design technique as one that offers a number of *reading pathways* for sign-readers with attributed opportunities and demands.

Changing the compositional structure of a visual prompt to one that provides the opportunity for viewers to take their own reading path for building meaning requires an understanding of how to logically link and separate ideas realised in a text. I argue that while this design technique in the NAPLAN may invite viewers to link aspects within the text in an individual way and provide greater reading flexibility, viewers are required to negotiate more complex intra and inter–semiotic connections. Knowing about these various types of connections and how to apply this knowledge in various instances would seem to benefit students if they are to make full use of the semiotic resources made available to them in these types of assessment prompts. Therefore, the demands as well as the opportunities this design feature may offer are factors that shape how students engage with and translate meaning from the text. This would appear to be supported by Callow (2013, p 97) where he states, “the composition of elements plays a critical role in meaning making.” In support of my argument regarding the complexity spatial relations can create for some students a comparative analysis

between a BST and a NAPLAN writing prompt is now undertaken. The BST writing prompt 'Rosie', illustrated in Figure 4.27 is a single visual narrative representation.

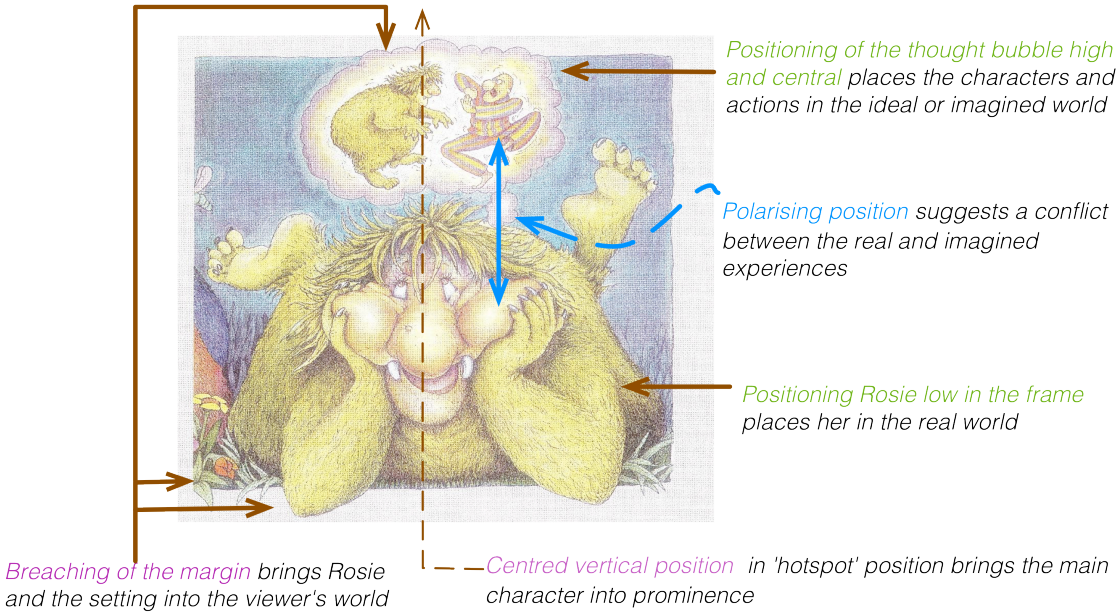


FIGURE 4.27: Positioning used in the 2000 BST prompt

Potential meanings in the 'Rosie' prompt can be interpreted using Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) compositional model that was described in chapter three. Drawing on the model, it can be understood that the main character Rosie is placed low in the picture indicating that she belongs to and exists in the real world depicted. Furthermore the breaches in the margin surrounding the depiction reach into the viewer's world offering closer personal connection. The thought bubble positioned high above Rosie's head places the characters and the action that is taking place inside the thought bubble in the ideal world outside of the one she exists in.

However, Kress and Van Leeuwen's compositional model was not as useful when analysing the screen–like layout of the NAPLAN writing prompts. The spatial or radial arrangement deployed to present multiple narrative representations in the NAPLAN writing prompts can be better understood by drawing on Caple's (2009) balance system. For instance, in the 2008 NAPLAN prompt 'Found' shown in Figure 4.28, individual pictures seem to be positioned to appropriate balance in the text rather than realise representational and interactions amongst the pictures.

Vertical and horizontal mirroring layout creates a balanced effect by spatially positioning pictures around the linguistic semiotic reflecting the similar positioning on both left and right sides of the text

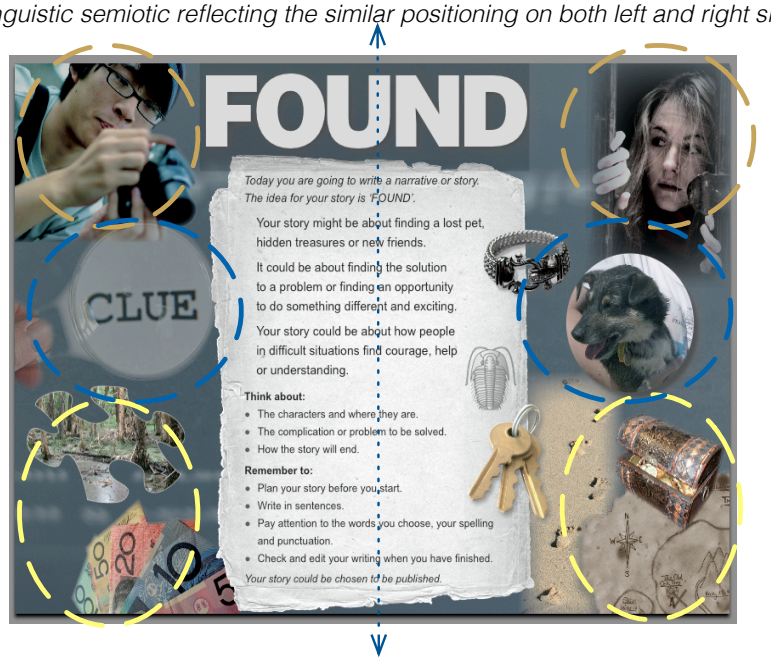


FIGURE 4.28: Spatial relations used in the 2008 NAPLAN writing prompt

As highlighted in Figure 4.28, if implementing Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) triptych model, the position of the teenage girl on the top right suggests she is an ideal concept presenting new ideas to viewers while the teenage boy on the left side of the prompt is in the ideal position but knowledge about this character is taken as a given. However, by drawing on Caple's (2009) balance system, viewers are able to consider positioning of pictures in close proximity down the left and right sides of the prompt as an alignment technique with the effect of creating a balanced visual text on a horizontal mirror point rather than positioning pictures to enable power relations.

The above comparative analysis demonstrates that meaning potentials are enabled by the compositional design of writing prompts. The shift to spatially arranged designs in recent NAPLAN prompts offers the potential for a more flexible and individualised viewing. However this design may be more complex than those presented in earlier BST prompts for some viewers because of the integral organisational elements used to realise meaning. Thus, knowledge about more multifaceted compositional techniques could benefit viewers as they try to make sense of the possible meaning potentials offered by the non-linguistic visual semiotic. Conversely, limited knowledge about these techniques would therefore seem to limit interpretation and play a role in students' responses.

Noteworthy is that despite the increase in complexity related to the compositional design and the increase in narrative representations offered, planning time for the assessment has remained the same over the last decade. The unchanged five-minute time allocation suggests that more is expected of younger students during the planning time in the National writing assessment than the earlier primary based Basic Skills Test. Considering the set time in current writing assessment programs, knowing how to make sense of what is offered in a short time would seem to reduce the challenge of puzzling out meaning potentials in the prompt.

4.7. Changes in the relations between visual semiotics

The changing organisation of prompts was also accompanied by a significant change in the salience and amount of information provided by each visual semiotic resource from the BST to the NAPLAN indicating less was offered by the linguistic source. This growing salience of non–linguistic visual semiotic resources across the selected writing prompts needs to be considered if we are to understand how students use the pictures provided as stimulus for their subsequent writing. With pictures and words working as two different semiotic resources with their own distinct ways to mean, the following discussion closely examines the change in complementary and concurrent relations between these two resources in writing prompts spanning from 2000–2010.

An analysis of the primary based BST writing assessments from 2000 to 2008 established how these prompts provide entry into a story via wordings and in the picture, seemingly making the prompts more considerate of young viewers. Beginning with the earliest sample, 'Rosie' illustrated in Figure 4.29, is one example of the way words and pictures engage a reader deeply with a story both complementary and concurrent relations between the semiotic resources.

The first block of verbiage includes the title of the task *"Writing Task One."* The title acts to equalise information across semiotic resources thus creating concurrent relations. Linguistic and non–linguistic aspects then depict the subsequent story orientation with each resource offering different and at time contradictory information to the viewer. That is, the picture represents a monster offering information about its colour, body covering, shape and size, and the world it exists within. The narrative presented linguistically offers further ideational meaning about the monster's identity by providing a name 'Rosie', her monster role as a *night-fright monster'*, her gender

through personal pronouns, and information about her attitude, wishes and the counter expectancy in the story. However, verbiage in this section also distributes new information about Rosie's negative inner feelings that are not substantiated in the picture of the smiling monster. These divergent inter–semiotic relations are identified in the following excerpt:

> More than anything else Rosie wanted to be like other night–fright monsters...She listened…She dreamed… But Rosie was afraid (DET 2000).

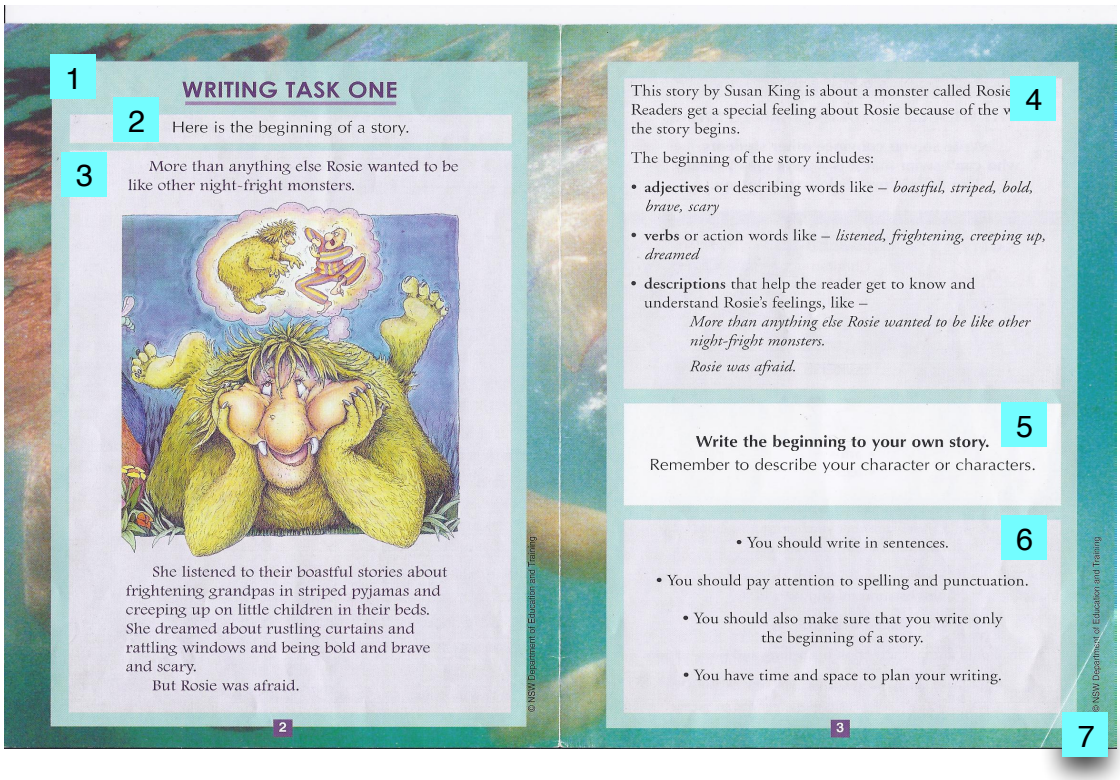


FIGURE 4.29: Relations between linguistic and non-linguistic visual resources

The linguistic semiotic also provides additional information about the thought bubble shown in the picture, telling the reader that the action taking place within the bubble is a dream – an envisaged rather than an actual event. My point here is that while the non–linguistic resource makes sense on its own, the verbiage in this text does different semiotic work using multiple elements (Bezemer & Kress 2010).

Up to this point, pictures and words in this prompt deeply engages the reader in a literary text, depicting the character's feelings, her world and her plight. At first, this depiction appears considerate of young viewers by engaging them in a picture book narrative. However the entry into this story is not to be continued in students'

compositions. Rather they are asked to draw on this stimulus to create a similar story that does not include the contents of the prompt provided at all. Rather than the story provided about Rosie, the writing task in the second block of information instructs students to, *"Write the beginning to your own story. Remember to describe your character or characters"* (DET 2000). In two sentences, students are dismissed from the visual stimulus in order to compose an unrelated narrative outside of the visual resources provided.

The following blocks of linguistic information move away from the narrative told to give instructions on how to tell a story. This shift thus moves the text's purpose from a literary to informational one. That is, the fifth block of information refers the reader back to the story told; making reference to the verbs, adjectives and clauses that have been used to amplify attitudes, mood and characterisation. These act in complementarity relations with the picture aspect.

Unlike 'Rosie', other BST writing prompts ask students to continue on with a story they have been invited into. The 2004 BST writing prompt 'The Ancient Box' is one such example. In this instance, sign–readers are asked to continue the story introduced to them in the prompt. As illustrated in Figure 4.30, the first block of information in the prompt labels the task and provides instructional information directing readers to draw on the picture first and then to read the words by saying, *"Look at the picture below and read the beginning of the story"* (DET 2004).

The second block of information features words within an ambient background thus integrating meaning from both visual semiotic resources. For example, the verbiage introduces readers to a locative circumstance, characters and time of the event that is taking place thus orientating the reader to the narrative. This information is not revealed by the non–linguistic visual component; That is, the words place the reader in a grandfather's shed then orientate the reader with related characters – a child and their grandfather. The verbiage then describes how the child character discovers *"an ancient box carved on the front and sides with unusual markings."* This character then sets out to explore the contents of the box during a Sunday visit. These narrative components are not depicted by the non–linguistic visual semiotic thus providing complementary relations by offering more than the picture offers on its own. Likewise the picture offers additional meaning not represented by the words through the use of

visual elements dealing with shape, colour, texture and position, thus reciprocating the complementarity between the two visual resources.

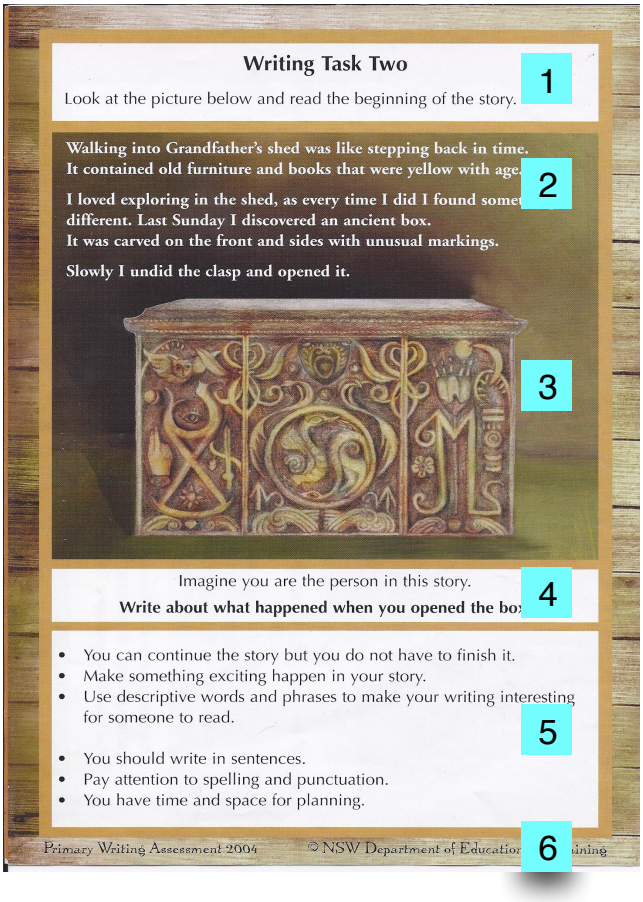


FIGURE 4.30: Relations between linguistic and non-linguistic visual resources

With respect to interpersonal meanings about the character's emotions the sentence, *"I loved exploring the shed, as every time I did I found something different"* provides additional interpersonal relations about the character's positive attitude. Additional information about the ambience of the setting shown in the picture is offered in the words through intensification and indirect appreciation.

> Walking into Grandfather's shed was like stepping back in time. It contained old furniture and books that were yellow with age.
> (DET 2004)

In these two sentences, the indirect appreciation provided by the verbiage enhances the believability about the existence of this type of box and the age of its creation as the character 'steps back in time' when the character walks into the shed. The verbiage achieves this by contextualising the box in 'a natural setting' of *"Grandfather's*

shed" with familiar realistic family characters that are not made available in the image. Yet, while the box is presented as a real object, semiotic choices capture the exoticism of the object in complementary ways. The picture features a box decorated with iconic symbols, stylised objects and antique patterns evoke mysterious ambience about the box. And, accompanying the picture, wording draws readers' attention to the special nature of the box describing it as *"carved on the front and sides with unusual markings"* (DET 2004). The linguistic resource acts in complementarity with the non-linguistic visual semiotic in this section by focusing on the participants and processes of what is going on and who is involved. The last sentence construes a physical activity suggesting an impending interruption. Rose (2011) argues a disrupting action is an essential stage in any narrative. And while the image does not indicate such a happening, the words enact this narrative complication in the sentence, *"Slowly I undid the clasp and opened it."* The next block of verbiage builds a relationship with the viewer by placing them in the story world via the clause, "*Imagine you are the person in this story."* This connection between the narrative and the sign-reader is demonstrated by the script directing the reader to the complicating action by asking them to, "*Write about what happened when you opened the box."*

Verbiage in the third block of information continues to focus students on the complicating event for their written narrative. Instructions guide the students to continue the story presented to them in the prompt without having to finish the story. Rather they are asked to focus on an *"exciting"* happening. The verbiage instructs the students to include a specific four–staged narrative and reminds students to write in sentences, and pay attention to spelling and punctuation in their subsequent writing.

Analyses similar to those provided above revealed generally across the BST writing prompts indicate that reading these types of assessment prompts involves recruiting syntactic, grammatical and typographical elements from verbiage together with a range of visual elements afforded to the non–linguistic visual semiotic The visual semiotic resources act in complementary ways with different affordances contributed in each instance. Common to all the BST prompts, is the provision of story aspects from the linguistic and non–linguistic components in the text. Despite the complementarity, each semiotic resource realises meaning in its own right. It could be considered that in general, if sign-readers combine meanings inter–semiotically in these texts, richer interpretations were available (Bezemer& Kress 2008; Lemke 2002), making the

linguistic and non–linguistic relations in these types of prompts considerate of young viewers writing narrative.

With the introduction of NAPLAN writing prompts, more is expected of the non–linguistic component with a significant reduction in the amount of story provided linguistically in the texts. Unlike the BST prompts where a significant amount of orientation or complication is provided as part of a written story, the verbiage in NAPLAN provides only general points of departure for students that are predominantly instructional. These changes, discussed in the following section, illustrate the growing salience of the non–linguistic visual component in writing assessment prompts and thus more responsibility for assisting students to work with this semiotic effectively.

In the NAPLAN, the 'writing task' title used in the BST prompts is replaced with a thematic title providing a topic that students are expected to write about. While Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, p 17) argue image is "a full means of representation," the accompaniment of a title in the NAPLAN writing prompts leads viewers to look at the pictures provided and 'see' particular elements for a narrative that engages the theme provided to them linguistically. For young viewers, this adds another layer of complexity as they not only have to understand the complex ways in which pictures mean, but connecting the pictures with the lead provided by the linguistic title and subsequent instructions offers a deeper interpretation. For example, the 2008 NAPLAN writing prompt (Figure 4.31) provides a thematic title *"Found."* Accompanying this title, students are informed that, "*The idea for your story is FOUND."*

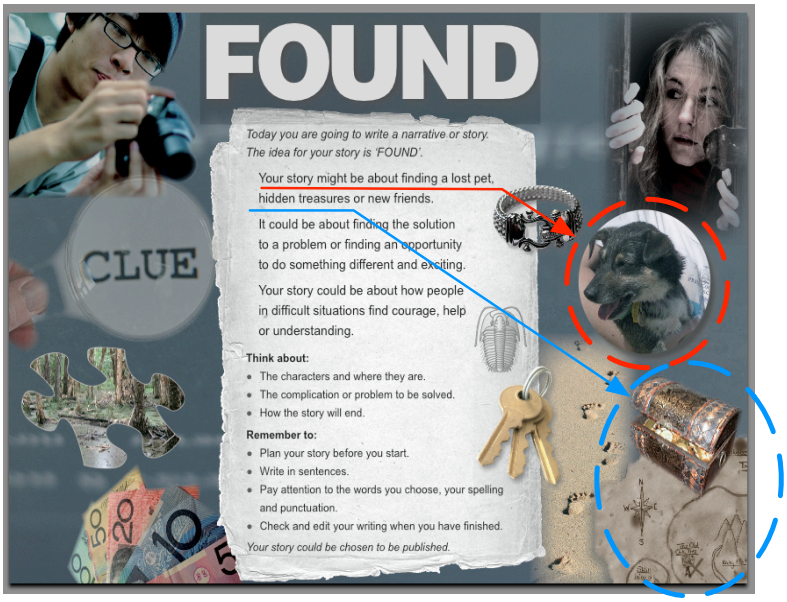


FIGURE 4.31:Linguistic and non–linguistic relations in the 2008 NAPLAN prompt

Students subsequently need to navigate through multiple random suggestions for their subsequent writing. After the script provides the idea for students, a selection of possibilities is provided as a stimulus for writing.

> Your story might be about finding a lost pet, hidden treasures or new friends. It could be about finding the solution to a problem or finding an opportunity to do something different and exciting. Your story could be about how people in difficult situations find courage, help or understanding (DET 2008).

Other examples such as the 2010 prompt 'What a Mess!' also provides a theme around the pictures shown. In these instances the suggestions are general without making specific reference to particular pictures in the prompt. The general information provided by the words evokes more complex and complementary intersemiotic relations. For example, one of the possible ideas suggested in the words is about *"finding a lost pet".*

A possible process of translation can be undertaken if viewers relate the classification of *'pet'* with the picture of the dog, as it is the only animal to fit this description represented amongst the selection of images. Meanings about the concept of *'found'* can be related to elements within the same picture involving the person holding the dog. Viewers can make decisions about whether this person depicted is involved with the activity, particularly with minimal circumstantial location provided in the picture to draw on. They can also work with the other number of pictures on the page, such as the treasure chest and make choices about the connection or irrelevance of these visual narratives in the story being constructed.

Royce (2007) argues readers working across inter–semiotic resources need to identify the 'cohesive ties' in order to link words and picture components. Cohesive ties across semiotic resources in the NAPLAN writing prompts are more complex than those enabled in the BST as broad themes and general ideas are presented in the words. In order to make inter–semiotic 'cohesive ties' students need to make choices amongst a selection of pictures. However not all topics made available in the linguistic component are depicted in the pictures. For example, the words suggest students could write about finding *'new friends'*, yet these friends are not depicted in the pictures. Conversely, not all the pictures shown are referred to in the words. For example, the words make no reference to pictures including the silver bracelet, the arthropod fossil,

the wad of money or the footprints in the sand. Rather words suggest themes for writing topics such as solutions, problems or opportunities. Because the words instantiate this high degree of generality about topics, the non–linguistic component means more. If students are to explicate specific ideas from prompts such as these for composing, drawing the most from each resources would benefit their interpretation. As such, students who are able to make the most use out of the textual functions enabling experiential and interpersonal functions to exist are better positioned for construal of meaning for composing.

4.8. Changes in the narrative components required in compositions

Analyses of the prompts revealed a significant shift in terms of the narrative components the students are asked to include in their composition between the BST and NAPLAN. While the BST asked students to write the *"beginning to their own story"* (DET 2000), *"continue the story"* (DET 2007) or asked them to continue a story with explicit instruction that they *"did not have to finish it"* (DET 2004), the NAPLAN instructions included the following, excerpt

> *Today you are going to write a narrative or story…*
>
> *Think about:*
>
> - *The characters and where they are*
> - *The complication or problem to be solved*
> - *How the story will end.*
>
> (ACARA 2010; DET 2009; DET 2008)

While the logic in this shift seems to be about catering for a wider cohort of students incorporating both primary and secondary sectors, this move asks more of younger students than previous BST writing assessments. Martin and Rothery's research (1981; 1980) on students' writing is useful to draw on when examining this shift. They identify narrative as a 'built on structure'. This structure, explained in detail in chapter two, is one that begins with personal narratives and recounts of actual events. The structure continues with more mature narratives including a crisis based on real events but told in an imaginative way. More developed narrative include all of these components embedded with a theme, complex stages, evaluative stances and less predictable phases. These more mature narratives can be factual, based on real events told in an imaginative way, or fictive in content. They argue that only competent writers achieve the more complex narratives, expected of older students (Martin & Rothery 1981).

In contrast to the cline attributed to this genre (Barthes 1975; Hudson 1991; Martin & Rothery 1991), current NAPLAN writing tasks ask students from year three to compose a narrative that includes an orientation, complication and resolution. Commentary within the instructions of the NAPLAN also implies the inclusion of an optional coda, thus extending a three–staged story to the four–staged narrative model (Labov 1997). Illustrated in Figure 4.32, the 2010 NAPLAN prompt 'What a Mess!' provides options for the different types of narrative that students can compose such as a personal recount about a 'mess or untidy place' to the more mature narratives including embedded themes about 'a tricky situation or a broken promise.'

The logic behind offering these choices may be one for offering various story aspects as if all suggestions are equally valued. However, the marking criteria suggest different weightings. That is, ideas including "psychological subjects, unexpected topics, mature viewpoints, elements of popular culture, satirical perspectives and traditional sub genre subjects of heroic quests, whodunit, good versus evil, or overcoming the odds" are clearly more highly valued texts in the marking criteria (MCEETYA 2008, p 8). Thus the choices that students make from the offers in the linguistic and non–linguistic stimuli provided to them in the prompts play a critical role in their ensuing compositions and thus on their assessment scores.

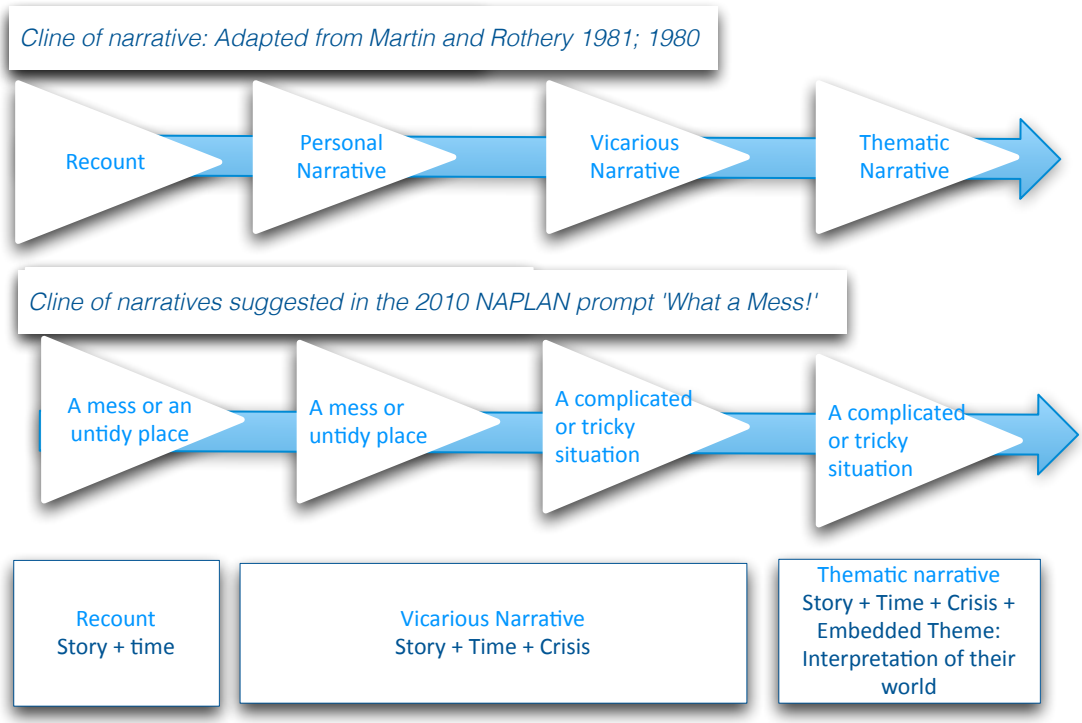


FIGURE 4.32: Cline of narrative type stories

4.9. Changes and implications for the students in this study

Based on the analysis revealing changes in the design and content of BST and NAPLAN visual writing prompts, the most significant shifts identified were those occurring with the introduction of the NAPLAN writing task in 2008. From the social semiotic approach to reading image, I also suggest that students' ease of interpreting the prompt, engagement with and preference towards particular visual representations would also differ from year to year.

The less engaged a student is with the visual prompt, the less likely they will develop narrative tropes from the resource for composing. Similarly, the more challenging students find a visual prompt, the less possible storylines could be drawn from the stimulus for composing From this perspective, I argue that varying degrees of engagement, complexity and ambiguity of the image in the visual writing prompts from year to year could impact significantly on the types of storylines students generate and negatively impact measurable results.

Considering the changes in prompt content and design each year, I would also argue that a participant's success and engagement with a visual prompt undertaken as part of the NAPLAN periodic delivery could vary accordingly. For example, a student may engage with the visual prompt provided in the year three NAPLAN writing task, take part in the transductive process and compose an equally rich narrative. However, the same student when undertaking the assessment in year five may be challenged by the visual prompt, limiting their interpretation and composition. Therefore, ambiguity, change in prompt design and content may result in less mature narratives and assessment results.

The following two chapters address the role visual writing prompts play in shaping four students' compositions. The discussion focuses on the analyses of the students' responses to visual prompts used in their classroom writing lessons and their interpretation of visual prompts provided in large-scale writing assessment prompts. Comparing their responses provided me information about how these students made sense of visual prompts in different teaching and assessment contexts, the challenges they encountered and the resources they drew on to tease out their problems.

Chapter five

Young writers of narrative

What is seen in an image is not only shaped and constrained by what is shown but also by a viewer's prior experience, their stance, and the situation in which image is viewed (Arnheim 1969; Barthes 1977; Chandler 2007; Halliday 2002). As such, the resources young writers bring to interpret a visual writing assessment prompt influence what is translated. Chapter five addresses this view, moving on from the analysis of the writing assessment tasks undertaken in the previous chapter to focus in on the students, their context of viewing and how they engaged with visual prompts to write.

This chapter begins by introducing the four student participants, their interests, their attitudes to reading, and their narrative reading preferences. I then explore the classroom environments for the students writing narratives. I present the analyses of data collected from the observation of two writing lessons and the writing that was generated. These young writers of narrative were involved in mediating across multi–semiotic resources to compose narrative in one lesson. I would argue that despite these semiotically rich and stimulating writing environments the process of transduction that the students were required to undertake was complex and not all of a piece.

In addition, my analysis reveals an influence of current national writing assessment regimes on classroom writing lessons. While choice, time and feedback are identified as important elements in teaching writing (Higgins et al 2006), imperatives for teaching young writers to work within the constraints of NAPLAN appeared to impact pedagogical practice, leaving less time for teaching about how to read and utilise visual resources. I would argue that transforming meaning from visual resources for composing also places literacy demands on young writers in addition to the narrative they are asked to compose.

5.1. The students in their learning environments

A sociocultural perspective argues that diverse factors are at play as students engage in learning (Hasan 2005; Hattie 2009; Kenway 2013; Sullivan 2012; Thibault 1991). These multiple dynamics include, but are not limited to, the demographics of the school, the class size in which the students work, the peers they learn alongside, the

teachers who facilitate learning experiences and the curriculum designed for them (Black et al 2004; Fullan 2009; Kenway 2013; Timperley 2011).

Information related to the students' background, social and school environment is useful for analysing the dynamics at play when students engage with texts of all kinds including image. In order to gather such information, data from the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority[1] (ACARA 2013) was accessed. In Australian schools, ACARA provides information about school communities on a numerical index scale of Community Socio-Educational Advantage known as the ICSEA value on the 'My school website'. The ICSEA value is derived from information about family background provided to schools directly from families and the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data (ACARA 2103). ACARA states that the ISCEA index represents students' educational advantage by the combination of variables that have the strongest association with student performance in NAPLAN tests.

The four students in this study, Noah, Thomas, Pamela and Ella were all in Year Four, attending large co-educational metropolitan schools in their local area at the time of data collection. The ISCEA data from the two schools shows that these students attended high performing schools, with a majority of their peers performing in the top bands of the NAPLAN writing assessment. The ISCEA values also indicated that the participating students brought similar Community Socio-Educational Advantage or influence to their learning tasks. A similar ICSEA value across the students' schools indicated that in 2009 between 64-74% of the students were in the top quarter of the ICSEA index. Comparatively similar NAPLAN results in both schools indicates that 81% of students were placed in the top two performance bands for the Year Three 2009 NAPLAN narrative writing task (ACARA 2013). These ICSEA values tell us something about the schools these students attended and the peers they interacted with. However the ICSEA data had limitations, with specific information about the individual students in this study not provided.

While acknowledging similarities between the demographics, school size, community socio-educational advantage and NAPLAN performances provided by the ICSEA index, there were significant differences in the language backgrounds of the students in each of the schools. In 2009, Noah attended a school with non–LBOTE peers, with English as his first language. In contrast to Noah, Thomas, Ella and Pamela, attended a

[1] Henceforth referred to as ACARA

school where 41% of students identified as having a language background other than English[2]. Both Ella and Pamela contributed to the 41%, identifying as LBOTE students. That is, both were born in Australia but spoke a language other than English (ACARA 2013). Thus, the difference in the students' language backgrounds was considered when analysing how the students in this study explored and composed from the NAPLAN writing prompts.

5.1.2. The students

Hattie (2003, p 1) argues that amongst the factors influencing student outcomes, "it is what students bring to the table that predicts achievement more than any other variable." As this study centres on the students and their responses to images, it is important to acknowledge, from the socio–cultural perspective, that what students know, recognise and value significantly influences what and how they respond to the images in writing prompts (Arnheim 1969; Lister & Wells 2001; Rose 2011). Therefore, by examining what each student is interested in, more can be learnt about what engages them in the images provided to them, what resources they draw on as they read these images and what they choose to feature from their interpretations in their subsequent compositions. Investigating how students engage with pictures assists in understanding how to develop teaching strategies and learning environments that facilitate effective student analysis of images.

Before meeting with the students I identified the information I wanted to collect in order to gauge each student's understanding of narrative, their type of engagement in reading, viewing and their experiences in writing narratives. I organised this information using the following indicative questions:

- *What types of books do you like to read?*
- *Why do these types of stories interest you?*
- *What do you like about the way the author tells the story to you?*
- *What do you think is important to be included in the stories you read?*
- *Do you like movies?*
- *What types of movies do you like to watch?*
- *What do you write about at school and do you enjoy writing?*
- *What types of things do you like to include when you write stories?*

[2] Henceforth referred to as LBOTE

These questions were used to guide but not dominate the interview so that detailed information could be gathered while allowing the students to share their values, attitudes and experiences with narrative in a natural and relaxed setting (Mirriam & Mirriam 2009; Yin 2009).

As explained in the first chapter, purposive sampling was implemented to select four students for this study: Noah, Thomas, Pamela and Ella. Noah participated in the pilot study and I met with him in his own home for three 40-minutes semi-structured interviews after school. As part of the larger study, I met with the three other students; Thomas, Ella and Pamela on the school site in their classroom during a writing lesson and in a conference room within the administration building for one individual interview, and two semi-structured group interviews.

Noah

Noah, an articulate, high–achieving eight-year old, was accelerated from Year Two at the end of 2009 to Year Four in 2010 as a result of his academic performance. Acceleration by 'grade–skipping' is one method adopted by schools to cater for gifted students (Frydenberg & O'Mullane 2000). As a result of Noah's acceleration through the curriculum, he bypassed Year Three curriculum content and so he was the only student in this study who had not previously participated in a Year Three NAPLAN writing assessment.

When I met Noah for the first time, we talked together about his enjoyment in playing computer games at home with his older teenage brother; for Noah this activity was his "most favourite thing" (Interview May 2010). Noah's interest in novels was also apparent from the collection of fantasy genre on his bookshelf, books that he informed me were read frequently and independently. As we talked about his book collection, he listed the series by Michael Scott (2010) as one of his favourite reads. One of the novels by Michael Scott, *The Secrets of the Immortal Nicholas Flamel* became the centre of our conversation. Noah explained that he was interested in this series because he liked to "see the people and them using their powers" (Interview May 2010). Characters involved in actions such as these are said to be principal components of narrative that develops agency in a story (Abbott 2009). For Noah, his attentiveness to characters using their powers suggests that agency in stories also interested him.

Noah talked about how he imagined or visualised characters and settings where events took place while he was reading narratives. He referred to imagining as "seeing people…[and] the place, like [the characters] using the events, like in the place it's in" (Interview May 2010). Noah also explained that he drew on real experiences to assist him 'imagine' and when he had not been to the places described by authors, he liked to "make it up" (Interview May 2010). However, while he remarked that he enjoyed imagining, he elaborated that it was not easy by emphasising that, "it's *hard* to imagine the story" (Interview May 2010). I am not suggesting that challenge is a bad thing, rather that the practice of 'imagining'' the characters and places described by authors can be difficult even for high achieving students.

For Noah, descriptive language was foregrounded as a resource that assisted him to imagine stories. He explained that clear descriptions provided by authors helped him to "see the people." One descriptive element identified by Noah was colour. Without colour details, Noah explained that he would "sometimes get a bit confused when [he] first reads the story" (Interview May 2010). For example, in an exchange about his favourite series of books, it was as if Noah resented 'having to re–imagine' his characters when the author provided detailed descriptions about characters as the narrative unfolded rather than in the initial orientation of the story.

> Because when I first read the story [there] isn't a clear description of the people like the colour of their eyes. And [it isn't] until the second book [that] they didn't tell you their colour of their eyes or their hair and then I find it really hard to imagine them with blonde hair because I have imagined them with black hair and then I have to re-imagine them with blonde hair.
> Interview, 4 May 2010, lines 19–22

Visual aspects such as distance and positioning were also elements that Noah described as useful for imagining scenes from the novels he was reading. For example, during our conversation about what he liked to imagine, Noah explained that he liked to "see background buildings and main buildings" (Interview May 2010). He talked about the position of buildings in relation to characters in his imagined scenes, "sometimes they are in the building, and sometimes they [the characters] are near the building or underneath it" (Interview May 2010).

It appeared that Noah used the buildings as entities assisting him to contextualise characters in a place when reading narratives. He also acknowledged that stories, which did not introduce him to settings and characters early in the orientation, were less engaging. Berger (1997) argues that the inclusion of elements to describe scenes such as perspective and symmetry provide readers with a precise 'picture' of the worlds that characters experience.

Noah's engagement with computer games influenced how he 'mapped out' his story scenes when reading narratives. Drawing on the visual elements of perspective and symmetry he explained, "sometimes you have to finish the building except the two sides you didn't see 'cause the characters didn't go that way but we know they are there because buildings are symmetrical" (Interview May 2010). Orchestrating settings spatially allows authors to choose what interests them in order to create a place or map for their characters and the actions that they are involved in (Kress 2009). Such spatial mapping explains Noah's use of elements such as background, perspective and distance to visualise a place for Noah's characters to enact happenings. From Kress' (2009) viewpoint, the choices that Noah made when setting up his scenes were not arbitrary but selected within the context of his social experiences.

In comparison to Noah's intense interest in reading narratives, when directly asked about composing stories, he was more reticent. Despite his reserve, writing narratives was part of his school life. At the time of data collection in May, he informed me that his writing lessons included a daily preparatory 'NAPLAN experience' where he was required to "go to year three to practise for NAPLAN." He explained that he returned to his "real class to do 15–minutes [writing] everyday" (Interview May 2010). This method indicates that specific preparatory writing lessons for NAPLAN absorb the time allocated for daily writing practices in his own class, reducing his time to write on his own topic and genre in his grade setting. Despite ACARA (2014) advising not to 'teach to the test,' as indicated by Noah's experience, this practice occurs in schools.

Not surprisingly, when the results from standardised testing such as NAPLAN are shared publicly as purported literacy levels, the pressure on schools to perform increases. Research suggests that this pressure can lead teachers to 'over-conform' and narrow the curriculum by teaching to the test (Elwood 2012; Jager 2012). The point I make here is that this experience was not enjoyable for Noah and his attitude toward writing was not increased by this classroom practice.

As we talked further about how he planned a story, it became clearer that the resources he described were similar to those that he identified as interesting when reading narratives. He again identified visual elements such as position, distance, perspective and symmetry as important story elements. For example, when asked about how he created scenes for a story he explained that:

> I see background buildings, main buildings and sometimes [the characters] are far away from the building [where] the place keeps changing because sometimes [characters] are in the building, near the building or underneath it. The next thing they are driving around [the building] so you have to make up more of the scene.
> Interview, 4 May 2010, lines 1620

Like Noah's preference for strong characterisation in the novels he reads, this story aspect was also highlighted during his conversation about story planning. He explained how he created characters in preparation for his subsequent stories by compiling "fact files" about them. These fact files included "general information" about characters that he thought readers would need to know. This "general information" included references to characters' names, personality and disposition. In the excerpt he talks about one of his imagined mythical creatures "Superpolous.[3]"

> I write about mythical creatures but I don't really write a story, I write fact files…well, like when I was writing Superpolous, I put that Superpolous was untameable like things of legend and the things that they would think. What the general information you would know if you would meet them.
> Interview, 4 May 2010, lines 25-30

As with the novels Noah reads and the narrative games he plays in the virtual digital world, buildings also featured in Noah's conversation about how he created settings in his compositions. He described how he included the name of places and specific types of buildings such as "catacombs and citadels in stories he had written at school" (Interview May 2010). His detailed descriptions contextualised his story characters in place and time. Interpersonal relations were further established by his use of colour,

[3] Superpolous was the name Noah provided for a mythical character in his story.

which Painter (2012) argues is an effective visual element for creating ambience in an image.

Points of evaluation were also referred to as important components of story. This was made clear when Noah described settings for his stories. For example, as Noah explained how he created characters for his stories, he incorporated evaluative stances about the narrative scenes, describing them as 'beautiful or barren' as shown in the following excerpt:

> Well I would say [write] the building, the name, the colours of the building in this beautiful place or barren place or anything like that…Well like in France, Paris - it is beautiful. Then I would say like they were moving along through the catacombs. Like I would start off like that and then finish off where the other people are in the citadel.
> Interview, 4 May 2010, lines 92–94, 108–112

Martin and White (2005) argue that the language of evaluation assists in aligning readers interpersonally with characters in a text. What I found interesting at this point was Noah's use of description to assist him 'see' stories that he was reading and one he identified as a resource for composing. Berger (1997) explains that description in linguistic narrative can create more than a visual image, that it can also be utilised to suggest characterisation and ambience thus generating feelings and attitudes in readers. This viewpoint helped me understand how Noah measured a quality narrative as one that had "really descriptive words like one or two of them in every sentence" (Interview May 2010). Considering Noah's articulate descriptive work and his acknowledged importance of this story aspect, I made sure that I asked Noah about the role description played when questioning him about his interpretation of the writing assessment prompts.

Despite Noah's interest in reading books, he was quick to divulge emphatically in his first interview that he "didn't do stories" (Interview April 2010). I questioned Noah further about this comment in order to understand what he meant. He explained that with limited time in class to expand upon his story plans he used his story plans to "make up stories in his head with [written] fact files" (Interview May 2010). These "fact files" included typical descriptive information about characters and places.

Many of Noah's choices of elements pointed to the influence of computer games on his story writing. Before many video games commence, viewers [players] are provided with character profiles (Middleton & Mather 2008; Unsworth; Thomas; Simpson & Asha 2005). Some computer games provide the opportunity for data entry where players construct characters such as superheroes or mythical creatures by building 'files' containing information about their attributes. These qualities may be physical such as eye and hair colour, the items they wear such as jewellery, clothing, health status, mood or temperament. Video games rely extensively on visual information in "virtual worlds" by providing menus and mini-maps including information about characters' health and capabilities, changing the way characters are represented and the audiences' relationships with them (Curwood 2013; Middleton & Mather 2008; Walsh 2010; Zammitto 2008). Noah's setting up of "fact files" replicates this gaming pattern. This has been observed by Curwood (2013) who argues that young video gamers are involved in creating characters by developing profiles including information about their identity and background when writing stories before they become involved in choosing their story adventures.

Noah also set up game–like experiences as "virtual visual narratives" (Alberti 2008). His approach reflects findings from existing research which argues computer games are visual narratives offering opportunities for players to engage in life–like journey experiences involving other people, objects and environments (Alberti 2008; Curwood 2013; Kromhout & Forceville 2013; Middleton & Mather 2008; Murray 2004; Zammitto 2008). As an avid player of computer based adventure quest games, it is as if Noah cannot do anything more to start his story until his characters and settings are sorted. Noah's comments about how he built settings for his compositions foregrounds the influence of the visual dimension of his gaming environments.

It is generally acknowledged that individuals have preferred ways of approaching and composing narrative (Abbott 2009; Hoffmann 2011; Hudson & Shapiro 1991; Minimai & McCabe 1995; Rose 2005). In Noah's case, his method for creating characters and setting for narratives is likely to disadvantage him in terms of the limited time provided and the narrative components required in current NAPLAN writing assessments. It is important to consider that computer games as a resource that students may draw on for composing narratives. While the visual is seen as an effective tool to communicate meaning, the complexity of expressing stories using a visual mode is identified in a body of literature (McLaran 2008; Maloney 2007; Walsh et al 2006; Abidin & Razak

2003; Matthews 1996). Findings suggest that different details are included when narratives are represented in different modes (Abidin & Razak 2003) indicating, among other ideas, that what is described in writing is not necessary used in the visual form.

If the types of stories Noah likes to read and those he interacts with in the virtual gaming environments influences his composing, I predicted that his preferences might also influence what he 'looked' for and puzzled out meaning potentials in a visual stimulus. Considering Noah's interest in image and the role image plays in shaping the stories he reads, plays and composes, I investigated whether these factors prepared him adequately for interpreting the visual prompts provided in the NAPLAN writing assessment stimulus. In the context of the current large–scale writing assessments, for Noah and students like him, less preferred narrative aspects made available, may not only evoke less meaning for them but also negatively impact the meanings they take up and use for composing. As my interaction with Noah was part of the pilot study, a writing sample from his classroom was not available. However, his written response to a challenging writing assessment prompt is presented and analysed alongside the other students' responses in chapter six.

Thomas

Thomas, a quietly spoken ten-year old, acknowledged a strong interest in reading narrative, stating that he often reads for homework and enjoys reading books "in the morning or whenever he [can]" (Group Interview December 2010). Thomas' interest in the vampire genre became evident during my first meeting with him when he described a book he was currently reading, 'The Saga of Darren Shan: The Vampire Prince' (Shan 2002). This was reinforced by an earlier comment that he liked to read "teenage vampire books" (Individual Interview November 2010). Like Noah, Thomas also foregrounded characters as a principal component for narratives. However, during my conversation with him about characters, rather than describing their physical appearance, he focussed on their heroic quests and the connotative meanings associated with this quest including characters' inner motivations such as sacrifice and friendship.

Propp describes (1992) 'bipolar oppositions' between main characters dealing with opposing values, social structures or power relations and what motivates them to act are key features of popular culture genre. It is this notion that appeared to interest Thomas. He talked about the complicating actions and inner struggles created as

characters interacted and solved problems with reference to his current book. This book was about “an ordinary boy” who “had to sacrifice his life to save the life of his friend but that his friend didn’t believe him because he [the character] had to fake his [own] death” (Interview November 2010).

Locating characters in time and place is also recognised as an important notion in narrative (Abbott 2009; Berger 1997). Like Noah, who talked about time and place, Thomas also brought up these aspects of narrative. However, while Noah’s descriptions of place were detailed, Thomas’ descriptions were limited to labelling entities found in a typical story setting such as “mountains, hills, rocks and trees” (Interview November 2010). This reference is evident in the following exchange where Thomas listed generic objects typical of landscape scenes, linking them with the actions undertaken by a character.

> T: I imagine them like climbing up hills and like one of them [a character]; they need to climb up the mountain. Yeh. I like to imagine everything that is happening.
> R: What sort of things, when you are imagining them climb up the mountain do// [you see?]
> T: //Trees, rocks, like its bumpy and it is like very high.
> Interview, 17 November 2010, lines 54–57

Thomas’ mention of such objects suggests that what is important for Thomas when talking about stories are everyday objects that go along with his hero in place to evoke a character in a naturalistic world. The inclusion of objects is understood not to be central to a story but rather assists to situate characters or enable them to carry out their actions (Bell 2010; Gibson 1986; Gibson 1977; Painter 2012a). . In visual grammar these objects are classified as ‘circumstance of means’ because they add to the realism of the characters, setting and events (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Painter 2012a). I predicted that Thomas would seek these aspects out when viewing the NAPLAN visual prompts in order to make sense of the possible meanings the stimulus prompt had to offer.

The generic four-staged narrative structure was also foregrounded by Thomas as an important feature of story. For example, as the following conversation excerpt illustrates, when Thomas talked about the structural organisation of narrative, he listed

the more predictable stages of narrative including “a beginning, a problem, a resolution and an ending” as essential components for a “good story” (Interview November 2010). These components replicate the scaffold he was provided with during his writing lesson and probably repeated his encounters with narrative in school.

> R: So what helps to show or tell a good story?
> T: You have you introduce the characters and the setting, who, when, where and what.
> R: Anything else?
> T: Ahh you do, if it’s the start like, then you do a problem and then you do a resolution and then you do the end.
> R: So what is the difference between the resolution and the end?
> T: Umm the resolution is when you fix it up and the end is like when its finished. Like there are no more adventures and that.
> Individual interview 17 November 2010, lines 41-48

In terms of the fictionality of narrative, the narrative typology described by Martin and Rothery (1980) acknowledges the ‘sliding scale of truth’ afforded to this type of text. However for Thomas, narrative was fiction specific, this type of text “had to be made up” (Interview November 2010). Young readers such as Thomas may be restricting the inclusion of realistic and everyday happenings in their interpretation of visual prompts and in their compositions when they understand narrative as a text that has to be imagined. I envisaged that Thomas might be more challenged when presented with realistic everyday pictures in NAPLAN writing prompts than those enacting imaginary characters and events.

Further to our conversation about the important components of a “good story,” Thomas indicated that the use of vocabulary and punctuation was important for creating an effective narrative. For example, in response to my question about what made a good story, he listed “a bit of speech, punctuation, capital letters, describing words and adjectives” as important linguistic aspects for narrative (Interview November 2010). Thomas also acknowledged descriptive language as a linguistic resource that “made a good story”. However, he provided limited descriptive language to enact setting and characters when he described these aspects of story.

Like Noah who expressed he just "doesn't do stories", Thomas shared negative feelings about his writing skills stating he was "just awful at writing like" (Interview December 2010). For both students, it appeared that writing narrative was not a process they felt confident about, despite their expressed enjoyment of reading this type of text. The tension between the students' enjoyment in reading authored narratives and their dislike of writing this genre is one that needs to be considered particularly since narrative texts are central to current teaching, learning and assessment cycles in the K–10 Australian Curriculum (ACARA 2013; NSW BOS 2013).

Pamela

Pamela, a ten-year old classmate of Thomas and Ella was the more reserved participant in the group. She spoke quietly and responded to the other students' comments rather than initiating discussion points. As a bilingual student, she participated in Greek school once a week. She spoke both Greek and English at home and her parents predominantly spoke their first language, Greek. Pamela also received language support at school from the ESL teacher.

Narrative was a part of her life at both school and home. She explained that in her "free time" she loved to read classic fantasy novels as her sub genre of choice, declaring *The Chronicles of Narnia* (C. S Lewis 1955) and *The Secret Garden* (Burnett 1911) as two of her favourites. Again, as with Noah and Thomas, characters were central to our conversation about what she enjoyed about books. However unlike the heroic quests or adventures enjoyed by the boys, the characters from the types of narratives she enjoyed were protagonists from a realistic world who enter into a fantasy one. For example, she described *Narnia* as exciting because the characters "go into a wardrobe and they are in a new world" (Interview November 2010). Characters remained a feature throughout our conversation about books. For example, she talked at length about characters from Robin Klein's stories and her enjoyment of the characters' personal journeys in the stories *Black Beauty* (Sewell 1877) and *Little Women* (Alcott 1868).

Various aspects of narratives foregrounded by Pamela were influenced by the affordances of mode, that is, she selected different aspects from film and books telling and showing the same story. For example, she observed how Aslan's power from *The Chronicles of Narnia* (C. S Lewis 1955) was represented differently in film and text

versions. She explained that she preferred how the film *Narnia* "showed" Aslan's power rather than the linguistic description of power in the written version of the story:

> P: Well in the Narnia one, …the movie is more interesting and the book doesn't have the exact same things. The things in the movie are much more interesting than the things in the book…Yeh 'cause in the movie like, you know Aslan?
>
> R: Yes.
>
> P: In the book I'm reading, he doesn't really ummm, like he doesn't ummm have the powers that he has in the movie. So that makes the movie more interesting.
>
> Interview 1P, lines 87–88, November 2010

Pamela's mode preferences were not fixed, as the following excerpt shows, her preference for mode varied depending on the story being told or shown.

> Some movies I start to watch and I just stick to them and I can't get away from them and same as the book 'cause the movie Little Women, I like the book better. It has; it uses better words in it than in the movie.
>
> Interview 1P, 92–96, 17 November 2010

The above conversation with Pamela describes how she preferred to watch the film version of *Narnia* to the novel version (Walt Disney Film Productions 2005). In other instances she favoured the literary version over the film mode. For example, she explained that she preferred the literary version of *Little Women* (Alcott 1868) rather than the film because of the way the author used "descriptive words" to share information about characters.

Pamela highlighted positioning herself as observer outside of the characters' world in stories as a preferred stance throughout my conversations with her. Painter (2012) argues that placing a viewer as if the character or looking over a character's shoulder enacts close interpersonal connection with what is going on in the picture. As explained in chapter three, 'focalisation' is a resource used to enact degrees of involvement between viewers and characters in a picture. For example, when Pamela talked about approaching scenes and events through the eyes of the character. Her comments indicate that a close connection with characters was a factor influencing her enjoyment of stories.

In the stories she reads, Pamela commented that she liked connecting with characters utilising direct dialogue and monologues so that she "knows what they [the characters] are thinking and what they are talking about" (Interview November 2010). She commented that "most storybooks [include] talk a lot and they show that they [characters] talk" (Interview November 2010). As explained in chapter three, dialogue and internal monologue are recognised as the most common means by which characters share information with each other and to the reader (Berger 1997). It was clear that conversation was also important to Pamela, highlighting the place of focalisation as a way to connect interpersonally with characters' feelings and motives. Despite the acknowledgement of the common use of dialogue in narratives (Berger 1997) and Pamela's appreciation of "conversation bits" in written stories, she commented that her teacher "doesn't really like lots of conversation bits in it" and is discouraged from using this literary device in her writing lessons (Individual Interview November 2010). A conscious awareness of focalisation and its role in composition might offer learners a more focussed view and skills for increasing interpersonal connections between their characters and audience.

In order to understand more about what was going on for Pamela as she chose different story elements, I focussed on one of the elements she talked about most often, that of colour. Kress' (2010) argues that colour is intimately bound to the affordances of mode. As a widely researched visual element, colour has also been argued to contribute to mood, ambience and interpersonal connections with a space and entities within that space (Dalke et al. 2006; Koller 2008; Kress & Leeuwen 2002; Leigh 2010; Longo 2001; Painter 2007; Painter; Martin & Unsworth 2013; Pantaleo 2007). So, for Pamela, while she talked about the effectiveness of colour in film when she described Aslam's use of power, she did not foreground this element when talking about aspects from the stories she was reading. Considering the consistent use of colour in NAPLAN writing prompts, I predicted that this visual aspect might be one she identified and engaged with when we talked about visual prompts. I also predicted that the use of colour might evoke feelings about the characters depicted considering her interest in this narrative component. The salience of how this aspect in the stories she composed was also considered when I analysed her composition.

There are two main points about characterisation that can be made from my analysis of Pamela's conversation. The first point is the tension that emerges for students when learning to compose utilising narrative resources they are familiar with and enjoy, while

having to comply with teachers' preferences and curriculum requirements. The second relates to the skills students require to recontextualise meaning across multi–semiotic resources in the process of translation. Students are required to undertake a process of transformation, interpreting meaning potentials within a mode such as identifying characterisation in pictures. They are also required to use their interpretations in a process of transduction changing meaning from a non–linguistic form to compose. Therefore, working with visual prompts for composing such as those in the NAPLAN visual writing prompts involves a number of complex skills. A student requires skills for identifying and engaging in narrative aspects offered by pictures. Writing stories also requires explicit linguistic skills; but it is the transductive hub of moving from pictures to words is one that also plays a critical role for working in and across each visual semiotic. This notion becomes increasingly significant throughout this chapter.

In describing what made a "good story" Pamela recited the generic stages of narrative text:

> A story is just something you read and learn about…Yeh umm like imaginary … like you have a beginning. Then ummm, then you just start off your story. Then you have a problem, then a resolution and then an end.
> Interview 1, 17 December 2010, lines 46–47, 49

Nonetheless, this narrative structure was not useful in assisting Pamela to critically reflect on the more complex novels that she engaged with. For example, she had difficulty identifying subtle staging devices and the more complex phases in the novels she was reading as fitting with the generic narrative structure she had learnt about at school. As we talked more about the components of these novels, I asked her to compare the four–staged narrative scaffold provided to her at school with the stages and phases she had foregrounded in our conversation about *Black Beauty.*

While Pamela acknowledged that the novel met some of the requirements of narrative, she did not classify the complex internal conflicts and social dilemmas from these novels as "problems." She recognised similar resolutions in the books she enjoyed as all having "happy endings", however she remained unconvinced that the novel *Black Beauty* was a narrative because it was, "still only a story about a happy horse" (Interview November 2010).

The detailed examination of theoretical viewpoints on narrative in chapter two are useful to draw on here in order to understand what was going on for Pamela at her stage of learning about this type of text. Theory recognises the spontaneity and simplicity of oral, written and shown stories (Abbott 2009; Barthes 1966; Labov & Waletzky 1997). However, for Pamela learning about narrative in year four, the complex novels she was able to read containing multiple storylines, parallel running plots and evaluative phases did not 'fit' with the generic structure presented during her writing lessons class as a scaffold for composing.

According to Fitzgerald, Speigel and Webb (1985), a learner's capacity to engage with narratives as readers and viewers outstrips capacity to compose and their skills for composing more complex narrative increases with age. For Pamela, as a developing writer said the stories she reads help her compose, bridging the divide between instruction and practice was not straightforward. It appeared that Pamela required explicit work to compare and evaluate aspects of the complex narratives she reads with those she is asked to compose in order to advance her understanding of the range of structures that narrative can use.

While these points about narrative were important to consider, they were not central to my investigation. I was more concerned with the role NAPLAN visual prompts played in depicting the "problems" that Pamela found so crucial to narrative. Research tells us that while children expect conflict between characters and events in narratives to occur, they could profit from explicit teaching about the nature of characters' internal conflicts with people and events as problems or complicating stages and phases of narrative (Fitzgerald et al. 1985; Rose 2008). These story aspects may assist to focus Pamela's interest in characters' inner feelings and personal journeys for writing and how these aspects might contribute to her compositions. Bearing in mind the importance she placed on these narrative aspects, focussing her view to seeing these aspects in the visual narratives in the NAPLAN prompts might better assist her to connect with the interactional function of the prompts.

Ella

Ella was in the same class as Thomas and Pamela. She was very keen to participate in our meetings and at the conclusion of our sessions always asked if she could stay longer than our assigned interview time. Her first language is English but with her mother's first language being French, she also spoke French occasionally at home and

when visiting her mother's parents in Tahiti. Ella commented that her dad knew very little French and, "sometimes [had] trouble understanding what mum was saying" when she talked in French (Interview December 2010).

Like the other students in this study, Ella stated that she enjoyed reading. Yet her choice of stories and the degrees to which she enjoyed narrative elements varied from the three other students. While the other students talked about preferring fantasy, adventure or classic novels, her preference was for reading mystery stories.

> R: So what kind of books do you like to read?
> E: I like to read mystery novels.
> R: Why do you like mystery novels?
> E: Because when it gets up to the mystery it just gets exciting.
> R: What makes it exciting?
> E: Finding out what happens and how they fix it.
> Interview, 17 November 2010, lines 6–12

The aspect of tension, commonly used in mystery stories intrigued Ella. As the previous excerpt illustrated, Ella enjoyed how characters resolved problems in mystery stories. Thus, rather than the more predictable stages of narrative, she was interested in the less defined phases within the complication describing complicating oppositions and tensions that a villain's actions created in the novel. Plum (1988, p. 257) argues that, "narrative alone creates the movement of rising tension, sustained suspense and falling tension," it is this wave of tension in narrative that appeared to interest her.

Similar to the other students, characters were foregrounded as essential components of narrative in the stories Ella preferred to read. For example, her attention focussed on the animal characters portrayed in *Cry of the Cat* (Rodda 2006) when describing what she enjoyed about stories. Rather than Pamela's concern about how the characters were feeling, she referred the motivation of the villains enacting crimes as important for developing characterisation. For example, she conversed with me at length, puzzling out the motivation of the villains for kidnapping the cats, going into detail when describing how the kidnapping was extrapolated in the novel.

Ella listed the generic stages, "orientation, complication, resolution and ending," as essential components for linguistic narrative. However, she was unable to explain the difference between a resolution and ending (coda), the optionality of coda, or the

increase in generality and commentary that a coda offers to readers. Perhaps her limited understanding about the flexibility attributed to narrative 'endings' impacted negatively on how she composed this type of text. For despite an expressed interest in the resolution stage of novels, Ella commented that orchestrating a resolution for her own compositions was very difficult. She indicated that once she "decides on a mystery" she "can't think about how to end it" (Group Interview December 2010).

Pre–assigned topics presented varying degrees of challenge for Ella. As we talked about her story preferences, she remarked that her success at composing mystery stories was dependent on the topic assigned to her. Because she preferred to write mysteries, she explained that less familiar subjects made writing stories more difficult, declaring that writing was therefore "sometimes sort of difficult but other [times] easier". Ella commented she preferred the opportunity to write form her own topic so she could "make–up what she wanted to" (Group Interview November 2010). Research argues that when students are engaged in a subject they prefer, they are more motivated to write (Bower 2011; Dix & Amoore 2010a, 2010b). Considering the importance Ella placed on what she was asked to write about, an unfamiliar or undesirable topic provided in the NAPLAN visual writing prompt might impact negatively on her motivation to write, the richness and the completion of her subsequent story.

During our conversation Ella talked about her difficulties in "planning and sequencing [narrative] all properly" (Group Interview November 2010). Labov (1972, p 130) postulates that only a complicating action is essential if we are to recognise a narrative, she did not recognise the freedom available for including an open ending and expressed concern that she needed a resolution for her mystery stories. However, it was unclear whether the challenges in creating "an ending" were around constructing the reverse of her story beginning at the experiential level of text construction (Plum 1988a) or in 'slicing together' words to develop a cohesive text dealing with the textual function of construing story. Nor was it clear whether the need for a resolution was influenced by the generic structure listed in the NAPLAN marking criteria and one adopted by her classroom teacher. If it was more of the latter, then perhaps she was challenged by finding words to describe settings to create a sense of mystery or words dealing with inner feelings and emotion that realise affect (Macken-Horarik 2012; Macken-Horarik; Love & Unsworth 2011). Knowing where the difficulty lies may go a long way in providing assistance to Ella.

In addition dealing with characters and setting, Ella also acknowledged the role of 'creativity' in crafting a possible world of experience in narrative. Like all the other students, she emphasised the importance of "describing words" as a useful resource that helped her to "see the story", thus engaging in the textual function of linguistic narrative. She remarked how the author Emily Rodda's "creative use of words described things really well," gave her a "better picture" of the story (Group Interview November 2010).

Macken–Horarik et al (2011, p. 15) state that, "productive writers draw on a range of systems at whole text, sentence and word level to achieve the purposes of the genre they are working within." This appeared to be the case for Ella when she described what was important to include in narrative. However, identification of effective resources does not always mean students can mobilise resources to construct their own texts. In Ella's case, I predicted that she would be interested in the problems enacted in a visual stimulus but if the subject and actions shown in the NAPLAN were not preferred suited her ability for construing a story from the pictures offered would be negatively impacted.

5.2. Summary of students' experiences

The discussion thus far has been concerned with the types of narratives that Noah, Thomas, Pamela and Ella enjoy reading, what they value in this type of text and what components they choose to include in their own writing. It has described the students' understanding of the function and structure of narrative, the types of stories they prefer to read and resources they might bring to compose this type of text.

Not surprisingly, the students preferred to write similar narratives to those that they were reading. Research supports this finding, claiming that young writers draw on their literary experiences as they compose texts (Bower 2011; Dix & Amoore 2010b; Dyson 2003; Rowe 2008; Stevens; Van Meter & Warcholak 2010). It could be predicted then that when they were required to write narratives, these students prepare by drawing on the narrative types they prefer reading and look for those elements when interpreting a narrative visual prompt.

While it is unrealistic that young students will be able to write with the same degree of

expertise as that of the authors of the novels that they read, for some of these novice writers, experimenting with narrative structures when composing is likely to cause conflicts when meeting the strict genre structural rules required of them in the NAPLAN writing assessments. Teachers differentiating tasks for students ready to experiment with more complex forms of narrative like those in the novels they read are faced with tensions aligning differentiated learning experiences with National Writing Assessment marking criterion.

5.3. Composing narrative in a classroom-writing lesson

Composing narrative in multi–semiotic, multimodal classrooms involve students in translating meaning in and across modes and mediums. Kress (2010) describes this notion as the process of translation (Kress 2010) that is a useful utility for examining how these students *transformed* meaning form various images and in *transductive* moves interpreted meaning from pictures, conversations, film and writing during their lesson. Drawing on the notion of translation enabled me investigate how these students engaged in making meaning for composing during their writing lessons. These notions are important to consider as transformation and transduction underpin children's interpretation of resources provided and thus plays a critical role in what is taken up from prompts to use when composing.

This section identifies the resources provided to Noah, Thomas, Pamela and Ella in their learning environments and how they engaged with these resources as stimulus for composing a narrative. It builds on the previous discussion about the students' narrative preferences and the particular components they identified as essential for the writing of this text. In doing so I consider the role their narrative preferences play alongside stimuli provided by their teacher, in their writing practices.

Kress' notion of translation (2010), provides an approach for understanding what was going on when the students were making sense of meaning potentials offered to them. The notion of translation for a discourse may involve the principles of transformation and / or transduction. That is*, transformation* – the constructs of meaning within one mode such as interpreting the way degrees or affordances of colour is utilised in a visual mode such as a picture; and *transduction* – the constructs of meaning across different modes such as interpreting elements from a picture mode (showing) and from

an oral mode (telling); then in a transductive move, combining meaning from both modes to create a new sign (in words). Kress (2010) describes the process of translation as a semiotic sequence of interest, attention, engagement, selection, framing, interpretation, then translating meaning to realise a new sign. This notion assisted me to examine the students' work of interpretation undertaken during their writing lessons.

5.3.1. Writing classroom one

Information about Noah's writing lessons was gathered through conversations with him in his own home. Because these meetings were part of the pilot study, data from direct classroom observation was not collected. Despite the absence of classroom observations, several key points can be drawn from the conversations with him as a learner-writer in his classroom. According to Noah's account, fictional books were the primary resources drawn on by his teacher as models for students' compositions. He explained that his teacher would ask individuals from the class to read stories aloud, and then instruct the students to use the modelled storyline as a basis for their compositions. As an example, Noah described how the class was expected to use the Chinese folktale, '*The Five Chinese Brothers'* (Huchet–Bishop 1938) to do this:

> We have to read books and then we have to do a quick plan of that story except we… I can't really explain it but like today we did the story about the Five Chinese Brothers and then we had to do the same storyline but like different powers, which results in different events. So yeh, that's basically it.
> Individual Interview, 4 May 2010, lines 73 - 76

Noah's classroom writing experience required him to recognise potential meanings in terms of structure and content from the story provided and then reshape those meanings using a similar storyline for his own written composition. In addition to meaning shifts within one written mode, he was required to translate meaning shifts across modes. For example, he explained that this teacher provided writing samples from students' past NAPLAN responses and read them to the students. The students would listen to this story (aural mode) and then in a *transductive move* re–articulate meaning in their own compositions (written mode). Noah commented that these

exemplars were “really good” because they included “really descriptive words. Like one or two of them in every sentence” (Interview May 2010).

Noah’s teacher seemed to place considerable value on using pre–assigned literary texts as models for writing. A body of research acknowledges the advantages of using literature as prototypes (Bower 2011; Brady & Millard 2012; Dix & Amoore 2010b; Flynn 2007). Appreciating and examining literature is clearly foregrounded in the new Australian Curriculum (ACARA 20014). This new curriculum explains that students from the foundation year of schooling need to:

> Learn how to compare and appraise the ways authors use language and literary techniques and devices to influence readers. They also learn to understand, interpret, discuss and evaluate how certain stylistic choices can create multiple layers of interpretation and effect.
>
> ACARA, 2012

Sharing quality literary texts provides students with an opportunity to explore the complex language choices used to create a narrative in context (Halliday 1985). However, Noah’s conversations about his daily writing practices also indicate that his writing lessons for the first half of his year were dominated by daily visits to a year three class to “practice the NAPLAN” (Interview 1 May 2010) suggesting that the writing pedagogical approach taken by his school was influenced by the imminent NAPLAN writing assessment. This left limited time for Noah to engage in composing narrative on his own topics or explore variations of the four-staged narrative structure.

While literary texts were used as a resource for students as a provision of topics and storylines, Noah was still challenged by how to create complex literary narratives. It seemed that while he recognised “complicated narratives” like fantasy, was able to list the more predictable stages and identify planning strategies for his writing of this type of text, by including “key phrases of the storyline,” (Interview May 2010), he still struggled to realise meanings for his narrative linguistically. As a result, he spent most of his writing time “thinking” rather than recording his ideas. It was as if Noah’s written compositions were mired by the challenges of the transductive process as he framed particular aspects of stories that he had read for his own compositions, and as he listened to stories as stimulus and drew on his imagined stories for his own writing. Thus, in addition to being provided with literary resources such as authored novels and

past NAPLAN writing papers, he also needed support in understanding the systems of meaning underlying the resources and skills in how to apply these skills for his own compositions (Martin 2009; Myhill et al 2013).

5.3.2. Writing classroom two

As part of the larger study, data was collected from observing a writing lesson in Thomas, Pamela and Ella's classroom. Detailed field notes were taken to investigate what was going on for these students during their writing lesson, the nature of the resources they were provided with and the usefulness of this approach for their subsequent writing. In the writing lesson I observed the teacher provided a topic and various stimuli and then asked the class to write a story utilising their interpretations.

The classroom for the lesson was small and cramped with the rows of desks in close proximity to accommodate the 29 students in the class. As Figure 5.1 illustrates, one side of the classroom was lined with computers arranged along a row of desks. Above these computers, various scaffolds for maths problem-solving strategies were displayed alongside various general spelling and punctuation rules.

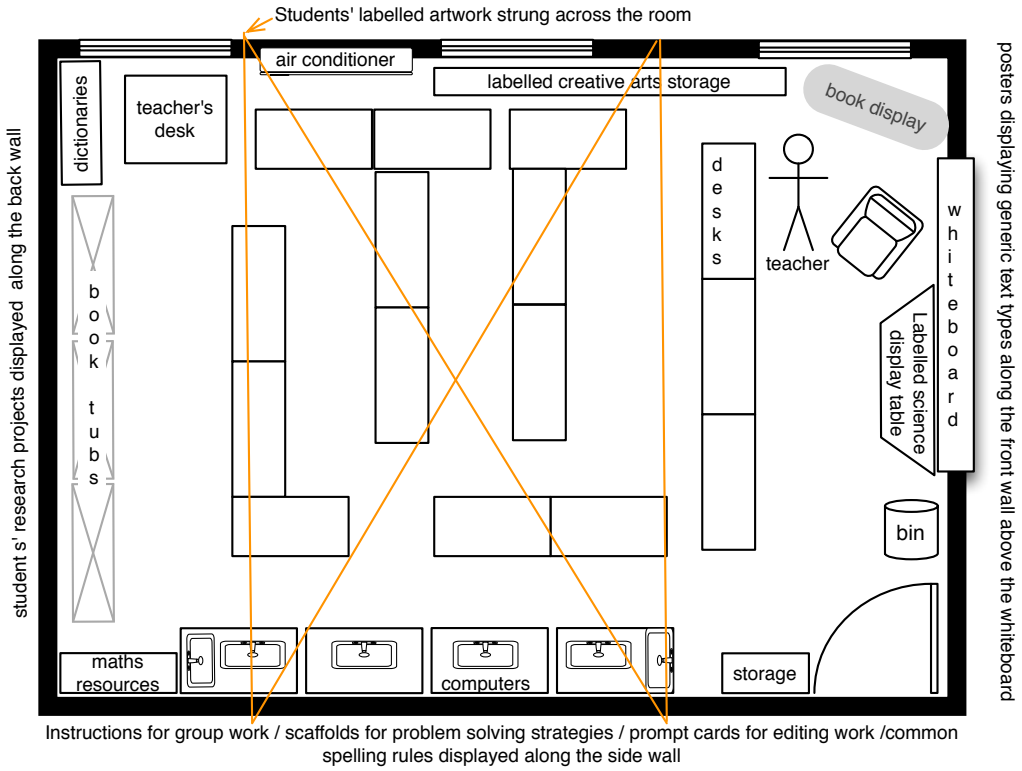


FIGURE 5.1: Classroom layout

At the rear of the classroom, a display of students' research projects lined the back wall, with an array of folders and book tubs below the labelled display. Each corner was stacked with equipment, ranging from maths resources such as compasses and geometric shapes to resources such as dictionaries. The front wall of the classroom was dominated by an interactive whiteboard, above which a set of published posters covered the wall. These displayed the generic text types including recount, narrative, exposition, discussion and report. Under the interactive whiteboard, a table exhibited students' dioramas on various science research projects that were accompanied by labels and short descriptions. Students' labelled artwork was strung across the high ceiling on multiple rows of coloured bunting. A bookshelf in the front corner of the room included a selection of published narrative and informative texts.

The teacher identified limited working space as a problem when providing writing spaces and conference areas for her students, explaining that students often made use of the adjacent hallway for group work and collaborative writing tasks (Informal teacher conversation, November 2010). Despite the limited space, the classroom was print–rich with labels accompanying displayed work, task instructions, prompt sheets around the room, and varied fiction and non–fiction reading materials on different subjects. During my conversation with the teacher about the issues related to space in her classroom, she described how students published their stories on computers, shared their published stories in digital mode on the school intranet site and read books utilising iBook software. The students' writing is published and for the majority of work, stored digitally.

5.3.3. A classroom writing lesson

The students' writing lesson, which I observed, began after their lunch break at 12.20pm and continued until their afternoon fruit break at 2.00pm. The learning sequence illustrated in Figure 5.2, is supported by Kress' (2009) process of translation to assist my explanation of this writing lesson.

The teacher–fronted lesson began as soon as the students were all seated at their desks. The students' teacher, Mrs Millar (pseudonym) introduced the writing lesson with the statement, "Okay. Today I'm going to tell you a story" (Observation notes November 2010). Mrs Millar then provided an oral recount of her childhood experiences involving an imaginative game called "playing schools" with her toys ensued.

The lesson involved a sequence of semiotic processes requiring the students in transform meaning across oral and aural modes as they listened and responded to their teacher's story. Presumably Mrs Millar told her personal story to *interest* students in the topic of 'toys.' She then endeavoured to bring the students' *attention* to particular components of story such as characters and setting when she built the field about the topic.

During the oral description, Mrs Millar explained how she used to set up her bedroom like a classroom. She foregrounded objects used to create a classroom scene including items such as chalk, a chalkboard, tables and chairs. These types of objects are often referred to as circumstantial objects because while not essential to plot, they assist in building a setting (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Painter 2012a). In doing so, she *selected* particular components as a way to orientate the students to her story.

As the lesson developed, the teacher selected particular visual elements when describing the characters in her recount. For example, she introduced the teddy character as "Ratcliff", then described the colour of its fur, its size in relation to herself and explained that, "when [she] tipped the teddy over, it said mamma" (Observation notes, November 2010). She further attempted to *engage* the students with the actions in her story by *selecting and framing* objects around similar possible experiences the students may have encountered through the provocation, "Do you ever play with your toys like that?" (Observation notes, November 2010). The following conversation reveals how Mrs Millar endeavoured to *engage* the students interpersonally with the story by sharing her own feelings of loneliness as a motivating factor for "playing schools".

Interpersonal engagement with the story was then extended as she invited the students to connect with characters in her story by attempting to *engage* them in making value judgements about her behaviour:

> TE: But when I played schools with my toys, they couldn't talk back to me. Do you think that bothered me? Why do you think I wanted them to talk back to me?
> E: Make it feel more real - like they were really real.
> P: Because you were lonely.

TE: Yeah. I wanted them to come alive. I pretended they were my friends.

Writing lesson observation notes, 11 November 2010, p. 2

After establishing denotative meanings about characters and setting, Mrs Millar's focussed the students' engagement with potential meaning that dealt with motives, values and feelings. This layer of meaning is often referred to as the connotative layer because it deals with broader and more abstract concepts (Van Leeuwen 2010).

It was the connotative layer that dominated the teacher's conversation with her students during her oral retelling. For example, she would pause her retelling and ask questions such as, "How do think that made me feel?" Then, following the students' responses, she justified her actions (as a character in the first person narrative) by explaining her motives and feelings by saying, "I was lonely; the only one at home and in my childhood we didn't have play dates" (Observation notes November 2010).

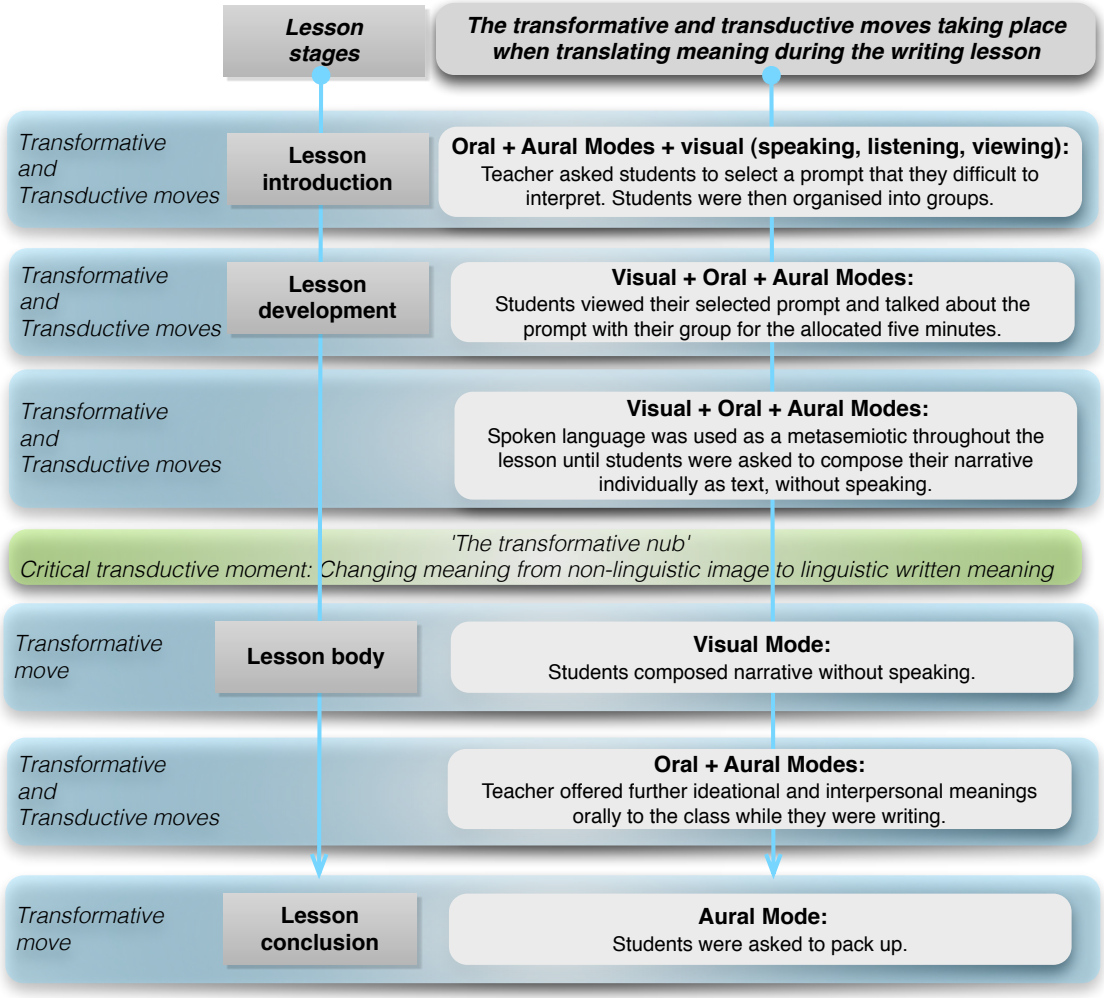


FIGURE: 5.2: The process of translation underway during the writing lesson

Judgements about the roles that characters played were also foregrounded during the oral retelling. For example, during the lesson introduction, Mrs Millar asked the students reflective questions about the emotional connection she had with her toys. Her introduction of toy props incorporated visual modes to the lesson. This appeared to be an attempt to engage the students interpersonally with the topic, the characters and the events. For example, Mrs Millar talked about her toy teddy, "Bambi." She described her teddy as being like a "security blanket" then asked the students what this term meant. She then asked about other terms such as "security dogs, security guards and security gates" (Observation notes November 2010). Guiding students' responses this way can be explained by the process of *framing*. This term refers to how elements are connected or disconnected within the total composition within and across modes (Jewitt & Oyama 2010; Van Leeuwen 2010). During the conversation about "security blankets," the students were invited to combine their life experiences and recontextualise co-presented ideas as new signs in the oral mode:

> TE: Bambi is like a security blanket. What do you think I mean by that?
> What do you sleep with?
> [Various students respond]
> TE: Who has a special toy?
> P: Yeh. I got a teddy. You get presents when you're sick because
> people feel sorry for you.
> TE: Do you ever tell them a secret?
> Writing lesson observation notes, 11 November 2010, p. 4

In addition to *transformation* within a mode, aspects of *transduction* occurred when the teacher referred to other familiar literary texts and film featuring toys including the picture book *Gorilla* (Browne 1992) and the Paramount film titled *The Indian in the Cupboard* (Oz 1995). As with Noah's writing lesson, the students were also required to interpret meaning as they listened to the teacher recall events from a picture book that used pictures and words, and from a film that incorporated image, sound and speech. In another example, during the lesson development stage, the students viewed a movie trailer from the Disney film, *Toy Story* that included image, movement and sound. While viewing the film, students were required to make meaning shifts in and across visual, oral and aural modes simultaneously to interpret meaning. They needed to attend to the visual and aural elements as they watched and listened to the film.

They then responded orally, by calling out the names of the Toy Story characters when they appeared on screen.

Another example of *transduction* across modes occurred when the toy character 'Woody' appeared on the screen. Immediately one boy from the class yelled out a key phrase that the main character commonly says during the film series, "there's a snake in my boot" (Observation notes November 2010), thus making a shift from image to speech by interpreting meaning from the image of the toy Woody in the film and responding verbally drawing on his prior knowledge about this character. Another example of transduction evidenced during the body of the lesson involved the students in *selecting* elements from the speech and the visual portrayal of characters' feelings and actions during a scene in the film clip. Thus they were expected to interpret meaning from across the modes of speech and image. The students were then required to *frame* potential meanings from the modes of speech and image and re–articulate their interpretation in the oral mode during as they talked together about meaning potentials.

At this point, some conclusions can be drawn from this lesson about the way resources were used to stimulate students' writing and how students were exposed to stimuli in their school learning setting. Most immediately obvious were the types of resources chosen and valued by the teacher for stimulating students' writing. These resources were selected as content for students to use when composing. The resources aligned with the components of narrative valued by the teacher. When she retold her personal recount, she drew the students' attention to particular components of narrative spending 20–minutes of the lesson orientating the students to the characters and their role in her story. As she orientated her audience to the story, she attempted to shape students' attitude about the characters and encourage them to make judgements about her relationship with them.

In addition to the provision of a pre-assigned topic, what was apparent from the analysis of the writing lesson was how students were expected to respond to the rich supply of multi-semiotic and multi-modal narrative stimuli. That is, during the development stage of the lesson students listened to a story, examined artifacts, and then watched a movie trailer. During engagement with each of these resources, intervals were provided for the students to respond verbally to the prompts where they were encouraged to evaluate the characters' actions and feelings in the stories (told

and shown). It was assumed that the students were capable of making meaning shifts across verbal, visual and tactile modes during this process. Yet this did not always work, with some students remaining disconnected from the story starters. For example, after Mrs Millar's detailed conversation about her toys, reference to films about toys such as 'The Indian in the Cupboard' (Oz 1995) and picture books such as *Gorilla* (Browne 2002), she asked the students how they would feel if their own toys came alive. Despite the multiple resources provided to stimulate an interpersonal response about this topic from the students, Thomas stated, "I don't know how I'd feel" (Observation notes November 2010). For him, it was as if he needed further assistance in selecting elements, framing them and accommodating his prior experiences and literary preferences in order to emerge with a re–articulated meaning for his subsequent story.

The lesson also incorporated an independent construction cycle. This occurred after the writing stimuli had been presented and a conversation between the teacher and students about the writing prompts had taken place. The four–staged narrative that had been foregrounded by Mrs Millar during her oral personal recount was reiterated as she instructed the students to compose a story about toys using the generic stages. This is evidenced in the following exchange that took place during the body of the lesson.

> TE: I want you to write me a story. You are going to write me a narrative about the day your toy came to life. What do you need to include?
> P: A title?
> TE: Yes.
> S: A beginning?
> TE: Yes, an orientation. What will you put in this part?
> P: Who, what, where, when, why!
> TE: Yes, then a complication and a resolution, then an ending.
> Writing lesson observation notes, 11 November 2010, p. 10

The narrative stages were then provided as a scaffold to the students, listed on an A4 sized piece of paper (Figure 5.3). They were also provided with a photocopied writing sheet from a previous NAPLAN writing sheet to record their story.

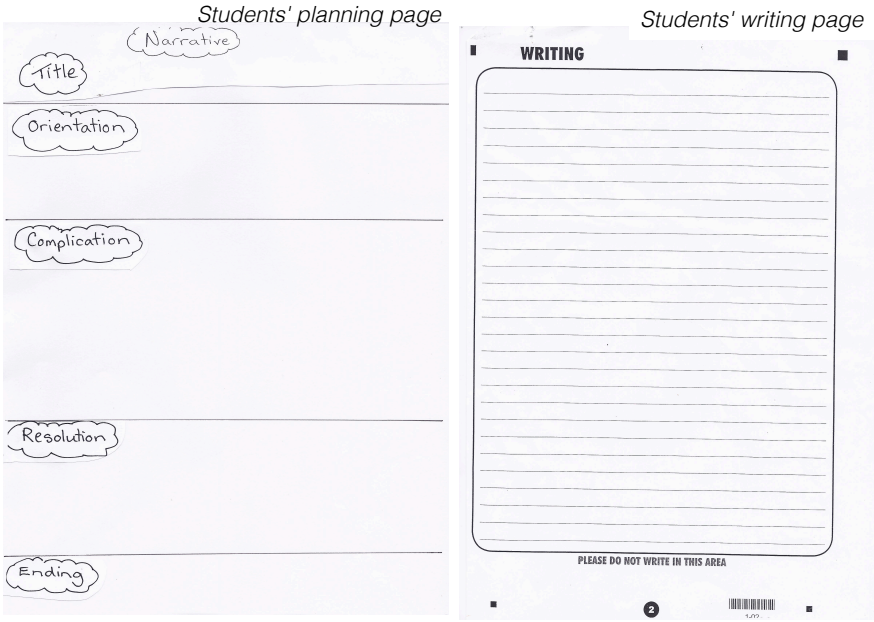


FIGURE 5.3: Material resources provided for students' compositions

The terminology used by Mrs Millar and the students for each narrative stage reflected that used by NAPLAN. The provision of photocopied writing sheets from previous NALAN writing assessment papers could be seen as indicative of the growing pressure for teachers to align teaching practices with the expectations of national assessment regimes (Higgins; Miller & Wegmann 2006; Hipwell & Klenowski 2011; Valencia & Buly 2004).

5.3.4. The classroom practices in summary

Communication in most typical classrooms is multimodal and multi–semiotic; taking place through the conversations, actions, sounds, eye contact, concrete kinaesthetic and non-linguistic visual resources used during the teaching and learning cycles. Researchers point to a broader range of multimodal texts in today's classrooms and argue that this move is reflective of the growing multimodal practices in and out of school (Jewitt 2008: Kress 2010; Unsworth 2006; Zammit 2010). Analyses of Thomas, Ella and Pamela's writing lesson reflected this approach because their teacher used a number of multi–semiotic and multimodal stimuli to engage students in a narrative writing task. They were provided with multiple semiotic materials during a stimulating lesson introduction, which involved the teacher sharing a personal story, providing a contemporary film clip and literature as resources to draw on for composing. These resources involved the students in transformative and transductive tasks when translating meaning from the resources.

Interpreting the abundance of stimuli required understanding the different semiotic work of each mode and skills in how to engage with a series of layered manoeuvres across literacies. A critical nub of the lesson involved the students in changing their interpretations from various modes and mediums into a linguistic narrative. Observations of the writing lesson suggest that while it might have appeared, at first glance, that a multimodal and multi–semiotic approach provided students with greater options for making meaning, some students were challenged by the work of translation at a number of differing levels. However, despite these differences, overwhelmingly, the transductive process of connecting multiple forms of semiotic material into ideas for composing a linguistic narrative was a critical aspect of the lesson.

The teacher had provided a range of rich stimuli with the opportunity for the students to pull out different aspects from different multi—semiotic stimuli around a single topic. This is very different from the provision of one visual stimulus in NAPLAN with very limited meaning potential in comparison to their classroom writing experiences. This finding is not suggesting the teacher's approach inappropriate – far from it. What the findings do say is that the style of rich multimodal multi–semiotic stimulus in classrooms doesn't fit with the National writing test approach. NAPLAN doesn't provide the immersion rich stimulus that classrooms provide. By providing one visual stimulus in high–stakes writing assessments makes interpreting the single prompt mean more.

However, as I will argue in the following section, the notion of visually abundant stimuli for composing may not always result in the desired effect if students are unable to realise meaning potentials from the stimuli. As Kress (2010, p 42) states, potential meanings in each mode need to be understood "in order to engage in and make sense of the subsequent semiotic work of interpretation." How the use of multiple resources played out for the students in my study is explored below through a detailed analysis of Thomas, Pamela and Ella's stories that were created during the latter stage of their writing lesson.

5.4. Writing narratives from resources provided in a classroom

The following section focuses on an examination of the aspects that interested Thomas, Ella and Pamela for composing during the writing lesson previously described and how they incorporated their generated into their subsequent stories. I

will argue two points. Firstly not all that interested the students during the writing lesson eventuated in their stories and secondly, particular visual elements appeared more salient to the students over others. While it would not be expected that students at this age would take up all the meaning potentials made available in the prompts provided, questions about what students recognised and then re–shaped in their transductive move to create new meaning arose particularly when students struggled to interpret meaning in various instances. Zammit (2010) emphasises the importance of not only including all semiotic modes in teaching, but developing students' competence in using all these modes. For the students in my study, when working with a challenging prompt they became stranded in the familiar. Learning about how pictures can mean and developing skills in critically analysing this semiotic enables students to explore greater possibilities that the visual semiotic offers (Callow 2013).

As has been pointed out earlier, students come to school with different kinds of life experiences, knowledge and narrative preferences that influence their writing (Dyson 2003; Kissell 2009; Thibault 2004; Vygotsky 1986). From this socio–cultural perspective, resources that the students in my study brought with them to the task were also considered when examining their compositions. Identifying what students select and how they utilise their selections for composing is critical if more is to be learnt about a student's capacity to identify, evaluate and recontextualise interpretations as stimulus for composing in learning and assessment contexts.

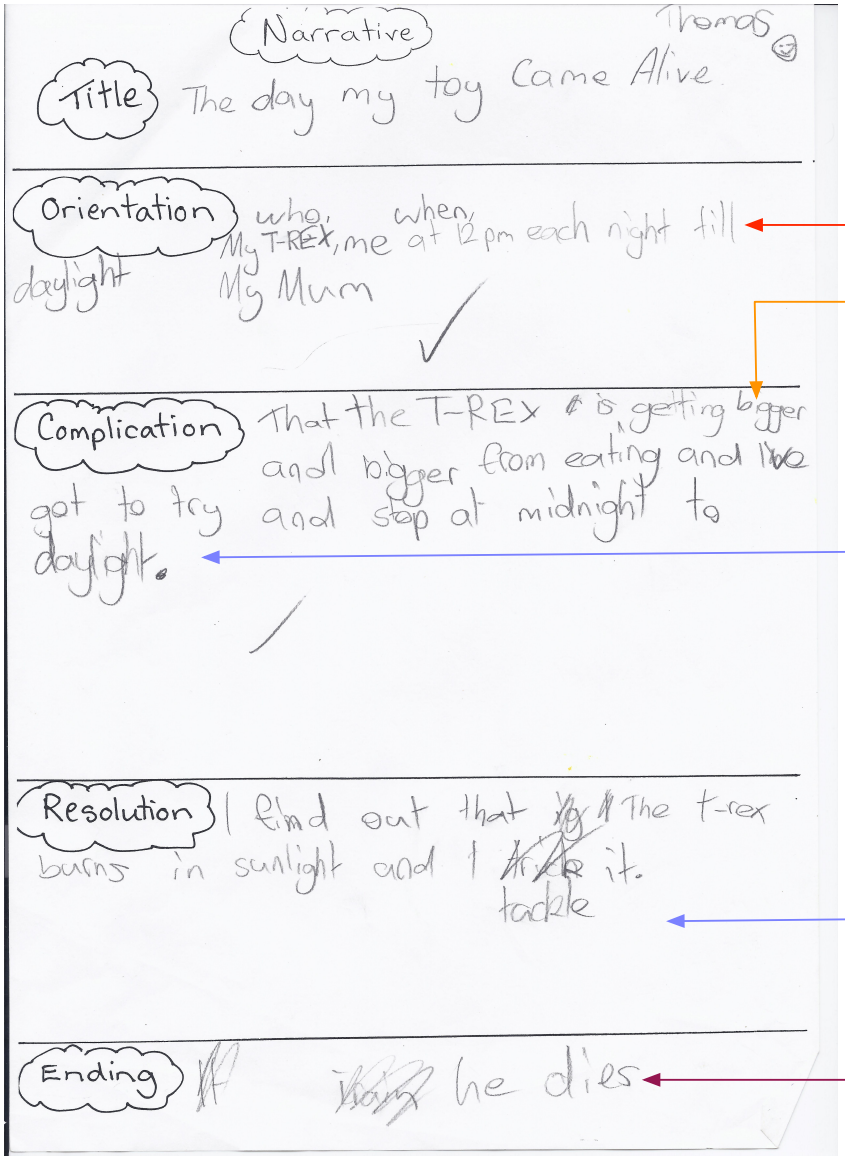
5.4.1. Thomas' planning of a heroic quest narrative

Thomas' reference for heroic quests shaped how he used the resources provided when planning a narrative about toys. This section explores the role that the resources played in his subsequent story construction. As described in analysis of the writing lesson, showing, telling and talking about the resources for composing took up half of the eighty-minute lesson. With the remaining forty-minutes, the students were required to plan and construct a narrative. To begin planning, Thomas and his peers were instructed to "write the title and think about their toy" (Observation notes November 2010). Thomas utilised the entire ten-minute planning time to outline the story structure shown in Figure 5.4.

However, once Mrs Millar directed the class that their planning time was over and that they needed to "start writing the real story," he did not commit any further words to paper for another twenty–minutes after that (Observation notes November 2010). He

spent this time organising his working space, visiting the recycling bin and wandering around the classroom. Thus, despite significant stimulus and a broad planned story outline, Thomas appeared to be struggling to move to the next stage of story construction.

As shown in Figure 5.4, Thomas' story plan indicates that, at the whole text level, he utilised the text structure specified on his planning sheet, which listed the four generic stages of narrative as an orientation, complication, resolution and ending. In the orientation, Thomas listed characters similar to those provided in the movie trailer *Toy Story* shown earlier in the lesson for his story.



Characters are introduced in the orientation.

A complicating action is introduced.

Complicating phase moving towards the resolution stage, where the hero realises what he needs to do to destroy the T–Rex.

The resolution stage, involving a complicating phase where the T–Rex is tackled in preparation for its destruction.

The resolution without a reflective coda.

FIGURE 5.4: Thomas' planning page for his subsequent story

The T–Rex dinosaur, one of the characters from the *Toy Story* film trailer, was selected as the antagonist for his story. Although not revealed in the clip shown to the students during the lesson, this film also features a primary–aged boy and his mum as two of the main characters. Thomas' inclusion of himself, a primary–aged boy and his mum as characters for his story indicates that Thomas was familiar with the film's content and drew on additional meaning that was not shown in the lesson as a resource for creating his story characters. This move indicates that the visual resource provided by his teacher triggered prior knowledge about familiar content for him to use in his story.

The teacher encouraged the use of first person narration during her oral recount. She reiterated the first person narrative later during the lesson when she gave instructions about the writing task explaining: "Now, I want you to write a narrative titled the day my toy came to life. It can be about any toy that you love" (Observation notes November 2010). While the teacher's approach can be recognised as a possible influence on the way Thomas narrated his story as a character taking part in events, it is also important to point out that telling stories in first person reflects the way we tell stories in everyday life (Abbott 2009). From this perspective, we can also consider Thomas' life experiences about narrative as a resource he drew on for his composition. He enacted close involvement as a first person participant in his composition, however, finer details of characters' physical appearance, temperament or motives were not included in his story plan despite the detailed description about characters provided during his teacher's oral retelling and his acknowledged interest in description when he reads stories.

Thomas' orientation plan indicated his accomplishment at including the core aspects of narrative that is: characters, actions and a setting (Labov & Waletzky 1997). He involved characters in time by listing a reoccurring event that would take place "at 12pm each night till daylight" in his orientation stage. However, further details outlining ambience or mood about this event, which could enrich interpersonal connections in his story were absent in his recorded story plan. For example, his plan included time–linked actions such as the T-Rex getting bigger, the revelation that sunlight would destroy the dinosaur, and the resolution to the problem – the T-Rex "dies".

Orientations in narrative are understood to introduce and identify participants in an event that includes time, place and initial behaviour (Berger 1997; Labov 1997). At the time of this data collection, teachers were still working with the previous NSW BOS

English K–6 Syllabus in which the narrative components were termed as 'who, when, where and how' (Board of Studies NSW 1999). In his planning (Figure 5.5), Thomas noted the characters as "who" and the place where the event occurred under the heading "where" in the planning section for the orientation.

In developing a chain of events indicative of those expected in narrative texts, Thomas then outlined several disruptions for the complication stage of his composition. In doing so, and in keeping with a first person narrative, he placed himself as the hero who had to "try and stop" the antagonist. His choice of conflict where he defeated the villain and survived as the hero suggested a power struggle. Thomas' complication stage evidences ideational components drawn from a number of resources. One resource utilised by Thomas was the imitation of a complicating action provided by the picture book *Gorilla* (Browne 1995). This book had been read to the class earlier that day (Observational notes November 2010). In this story, a girl's toy gorilla comes to life overnight growing into a life sized 'real' gorilla. Thomas selected the same action and complication by allowing his antagonist T-Rex to "get bigger and bigger" overnight. Yet, unlike the picture book *Gorilla* where the characters form a positive personal bond, his toy menaced other participants and needed to be destroyed. The second resource used by Thomas for his complication stage was his literary preference for heroic quests. He drew on this trope when he "tackled" the archetype villain – the T-Rex. However, his plan for a heroic quest lacked deeper connotative messages about the meaning of life that a hero may undergo, neither did the hero's journey reveal some sort of truth typical of more mature heroic quests.

A story resolution was also included in Thomas' planning stage, derivative of resolutions provided by the teenage vampire stories he enjoyed reading. In fantasy horror genre, common resolutions involve resolutions where 'undead' are destroyed when burnt by sunlight. In Thomas' plan, he wrote that, the T–Rex is tackled, taken into the daylight where he "burns in sunlight." As part of the complication, this planned fight scene was brief yet causally linked to the resolution where the dinosaur "dies." Thomas' inclusion of this phase in the "ending" section of the planning page did not reflect the re–orientating purpose of a coda, thus demonstrating his lack of clarity about this optional stage that is generally expected in more developed narratives.

Thomas' story plan incorporated the essential components of a time sequenced four–staged narrative, with brief complicating phases as supplementary events pulling the

story forward. While an underlying connotative message was not specified in Thomas' story plan, the notion of good versus evil was implicit through his character choice, the problem set and the designed resolution. However, connotative details dealing with character relationships, feelings or motives that he foregrounded as aspects that he enjoyed when reading narratives, were not selected for his story plan.

In summary, Thomas produced a story plan using the scaffold in which he identified, selected, combined and then co-presented different ideas from various resources. These resources included aspects from those presented during the lesson and those he brought to the task. The following section now examines how Thomas used his plan for a final composition.

5.4.2. Thomas as the hero in his quest narrative

Thomas adopted the first person narration used by his teacher during the oral recount to place himself as the hero in his story. From the forty minutes provided to him to write, he did not commit any further writing to paper after the planning time for twenty minutes, instead he participated in avoidance strategies such as sharpening pencils and tidying his desk. However, after this, he returned to his desk, taking long breaks in between his sentences for the remaining writing time to compose a heroic quest titled "The day my toy came to life." Thomas elaborated on the ideas from his scaffold to script a narrative that includes an orientation, complication and resolution. Shown in Figure 5.5, his orientation elaborates on aspects of time, actions and place without adding any further character description. For example, he introduces a typical life–imitating evening where the character heads to the bedroom at nine o'clock after saying goodnight to his mum, thus labelling the characters without describing their physical appearance or mood. While Thomas' orientation introduces more information about place and time compared to his plan, minimal circumstantial objects are included, that might add description of the environment or his bedroom to create ambience or mood. Using minimal description and objects to create a realistic setting for his story, Thomas utilised evaluative phases to create a sense of normality about the situation. This was achieved by using the typical everyday occurrence of reading at night as something the character "always did." Thus, albeit not elaborated, Thomas included the essential elements for the orientation stage of narrative. He also exaggerated the ordinariness of events for readers.

The Day My Toy Came Alive

It was 9 o'clock and it was time for bed. "Good night" my mum said just as I was heading to my bedroom. I started to read, I always did that, because it always makes me sleepy. It was 9:30 now and I just turned off my light.

Real life experience as a resource for his composition

The next morning my mum was in a grumpy mood. I didn't know why, just then she said, "thought you could eat all my biscuits?"

"Mum I don't know what you're talking about I had a lovely sleep last night and didn't get out of bed!" I replied angrily.

Tonight I made sure I didn't go to sleep. Just then I saw who the cookie thief was. It was my toy T-Rex but it looked bigger than normal with his ferocious red eyes, his sharp looking teeth with green slimy looking scales made me scream but the words weren't coming out I started to run for my life before it bit my fingers and toes off. I was in the dining room now and start to calm down and I realized if I let this thing ate the whole planet including myself it would be the end of the world.

The T–rex dinosaur character from the 'Toy Story' film clip as a resource

The complicating action from the picture book 'Gorilla' as a resource

The next night I stood awake until midnight to the T-Rex woke up. There it was, even bigger than last night probably from eating the other batch of cookies. I started following T-Rex to see where it went. I was now in the kitchen no big surprises there I thought to myself. I saw it eat all the meat this time it was growing bigger and bigger and it was about one metre tall and wide it was sunlight now and the T- Rex went back to my cupboard.

A phase from the film 'The Indian in My Cupboard' using a character from Toystory film as a resource

A common resolution from his preferred vampire fantasy genre as a resource

The next night while I was waiting for it to come alive I realized that it would probably turn to dust in the sunlight. So at 6 o'clock when it was going back to my cupboard I tackled it and I brought it outside and there it was turning to dust.

His preference for vampire fantasy and heroic actions as a resource

FIGURE 5.5: Thomas' composition

Tension is built into his story by the use of a complicating phase as a trigger toward the most reportable disrupting event. For example, his story includes a conversation between the child and mother characters, then causally links this interaction with further complicating actions involving staying awake instead of sleeping, which in turn leads to the discovery of the "cookie thief":

> Just then she said, "Thought you could eat all my biscuits?"
>
> "Mum, I don't know what you're talking about. I had a lovely sleep and didn't get out of bed all night" I replied angrily.

> Tonight I made sure I didn't go to sleep. Just then I saw who the cookie thief was.
> Thomas' Composition, November 2010

Instances of evaluation are repeated throughout Thomas' story as the events proceeded in time. For example, after the arrival of both characters in the kitchen scene, Thomas then wrote a reflective statement utilising direct thought; "no big surprises there I thought to myself." Further instances of evaluation about events occur when he describes a complication and a possible apocalyptic ending followed by a reflective comment linking actions causally, "if I let the thing eat the whole planet, including myself, it would be the end of the world." This causal connection is typical and essential for a narrative script (Labov 1997) indicating Thomas' development in composing this type of text.

Characters and actions created in Thomas' planning stage are further developed in his story. As illustrated in the following Figure 5.6, his portrayal of characters and setting are shaped by the co–selection and combination of components from a number of resources. That is, he selected his T–Rex character from the 'Toy Story' film trailer as one of a number of other characters shown in the scene.

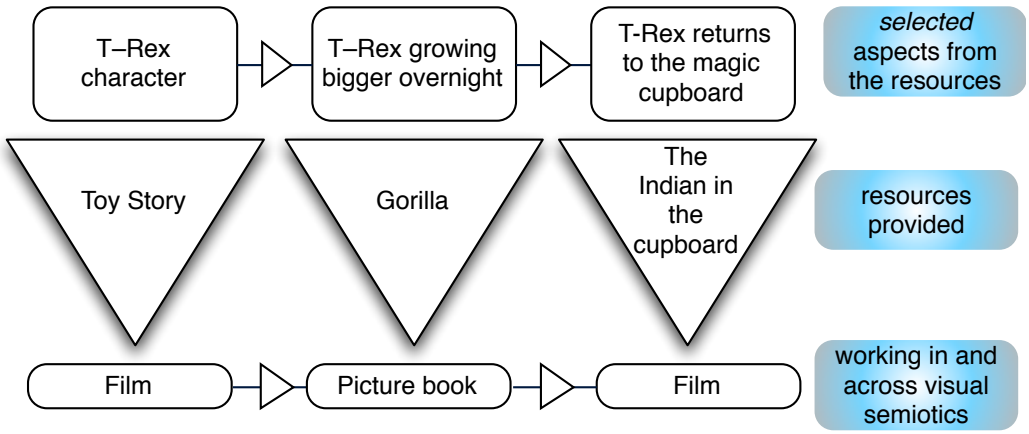


FIGURE 5.6: Thomas' translation of potential meanings

Thomas then connected the T–Rex character with actions from other sources. For example, he selected the complicating action where his T–Rex grew bigger. This action was similar to that enacted in the picture book *'Gorilla'*. He then selected a magic cupboard for his T–Rex character to return to each day. This sense of place was similar to the place where the toy Indian from the film, *'The Indian in the Cupboard'* returned to each day. The combining of resources in his story indicated that Thomas

selected particular elements from each resource provided that interested him. Thomas then resolved his narrative briefly in the last clause explaining, “there [the T–Rex] was, turning to dust,” thus crafting the idea of ‘good overcoming evil’ from beginning to the end of his narrative. Rather than using the resources provided that focussed on characters and problems, his story ending indicates influence from his literary preferences for vampire fantasy and heroic quests.

Thomas undertook a number of transformative steps in each mode working towards a transductive process by engaging with and selecting particular components from various resources for his composition described above. The transformative sequence built to the transductive hub of the lesson, where the evidence of his interpretations can be seen in text. His translation was dependent on two issues. The first issue deals with Thomas’ capacity to identify potential meaning and the second centres around the issue of choice. He engaged with various components from the multi-semiotic resources as stimulus for his composition. These resources included a film trailer that employed visual, speech and kinaesthetic modes, a retelling utilising oral and aural modes and a picture book that incorporated linguistic and non–linguistic visual modes. In addition, Thomas drew on everyday life experiences that involved visual, speech and kinaesthetic modes co–selecting and combining components from each of these resources to recontextualise his interpretations. He also drew on his preferred literary genre of fantasy horror and narrative tropes dealing with heroic quests and vampire horror for his composition.

Thomas’ story also involved the process of *selection*. He included particular narrative organisational structures, narrative tropes and visual elements. He chose particular components discarding others, not utilising all that was presented to him. Rather he selected particular aspects that interested him and excluded others for his final ensemble. For example, Thomas chose the T–Rex dinosaur as a character and not any number of alternatives that appeared in the ‘Toy Story’ film trailer such as the Woody, Slinky Dog, Mr and Mrs Potato Head or Bo Peep. Nor did he select any of the toy characters offered as resources by his teacher in her oral recount such as teddy bears or toy dolls.

The characters Thomas chose were involved in particular events leading to complications and resolutions that were not shared as resources during the lesson. For example, he involved the T–Rex in a complicating action of eating a batch of home

baked biscuits; an idea not provided by any of the resources during the lesson. He causally linked this complication to its unprecedented growth – an action not enacted by any of the stimuli provided in the lesson.

For Thomas, composing therefore involved interest, engagement in and framing of chosen aspects from a number of visual resources, as well as from his literary preferences including imaginary heroic quests and fantasy horror, and real–life experiences. In this instance, Thomas was able to engage with, select, frame and co–instantiate meanings from multiple resources, to translate his interpretations to compose a story about toys. Yet, the transformative process is not the same for everyone. This notion is supported by the analysis of the other students' interpretive process that began with an interest in different story aspects, different strategies for engaging with unfamiliar topics, characters and events that impacted their process of translation.

5.4.3. Visual affordances used by Thomas to compose

The portrayal of the archetype villain, the T-Rex, in Thomas' heroic quest is intensified by his use of visual affordances including size, colour and shape combined in one sentence:

> It was my toy T-Rex, but it looked bigger than normal with his ferocious red eyes, his sharp looking teeth with green slimy looking scales…
> Thomas' Composition, November 2010

The visual element of size continues throughout Thomas' story as part of a series of complicating phases. For example, the T-Rex is initially introduced appearing "bigger than normal" and continues to grow "bigger and bigger" until it is "one metre tall." Size is used to indicate the ferocity and danger of the villain in his story.

Thomas' time-sequenced story involving a series of events over two consecutive nights is dominated by the labelling objects within settings that contribute to spatial locale and manner of actions. While he composed a successful story, he did not draw on other visual affordances that could have further contributed to interpersonal meaning such as proximity, angles, and orientation in his settings or the colour that can further evoke mood, ambience and intensify tension (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Painter 2012b).

It is understood that the less detail provided about a setting, the less contextualised the experience and the less naturalistic the situation appears (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Wang 2007). Whether Thomas intentionally deployed this device to abstract the events in his story from reality, or whether the result of limited skill in deploying linguistic resource to describe what was going on, is unclear. Research argues that students need a language to describe and represent forms of meaning (Caple 2009; Cazden et al. 2005; Macken-Horarik 2009a, b; O'Halloran; Tan; A & Podlasov 2009). My analysis of Thomas' response to the NAPLAN visual prompts in chapter six considers his limited inclusion of detail when describing characters and setting, the importance of description he acknowledged earlier in this chapter and the limited range of visual elements he deployed in his story.

5.4.4. Pamela's planning of a fantasy narrative

Pamela's interest in fantasy resurged in her own writing. Her contribution during the lesson introduction was minimal, leaning back in her chair without adding to the class conversation. When instructed to write a story plan, unlike Thomas who wrote for the complete planning time followed by avoidance behaviour before composing, Pamela spent most of the planning time exhibiting avoidance strategies such as chewing the end of her pencil, interspersed with writing a few words then rubbing them out repeatedly. Consequently, when Mrs Millar advised the class that planning time was over and that they needed to commence their story as shown in Figure 5.7, the title, which her teacher had provided was followed by limited writing. In the orientation section of the planning page, she listed a protagonist (herself as a character in the story) and antagonist (a bird character). She also listed the time for the event, "one spring night," and an interruption as evidenced in her sentence, "I heard like somebody shot a gun."

Apart from these orientation components, Pamela began her subsequent story without a planned complication, resolution or optional coda (ending). Her response raises the issue of the scaffold's purpose. Mrs Millar commented after the writing lesson that,

> [Students] need to continually read their writing. So, if they don't have a detailed plan for their story, they forget their ideas and have to focus on trying to remember their plan.
>
> Informal conversation, 27 November 2010

However, three points can be considered with respect to Pamela's draft. Firstly, it was as if she needed to plan and revise during the writing process before going further with her story, rather than completing an overall four–staged narrative plan before composing as was suggested by the scaffold. Secondly, the resources provided had perhaps not stimulated ideas for a story leaving her challenged by the topic. Her difficulty with the process of translation may have been exacerbated by the challenge of identifying relevant aspects from stimuli provided. Thirdly, some people need a plan for writing and others don't. Perhaps a plan does not assist Pamela to compose because once the story writing time started she entered into the task immediately.

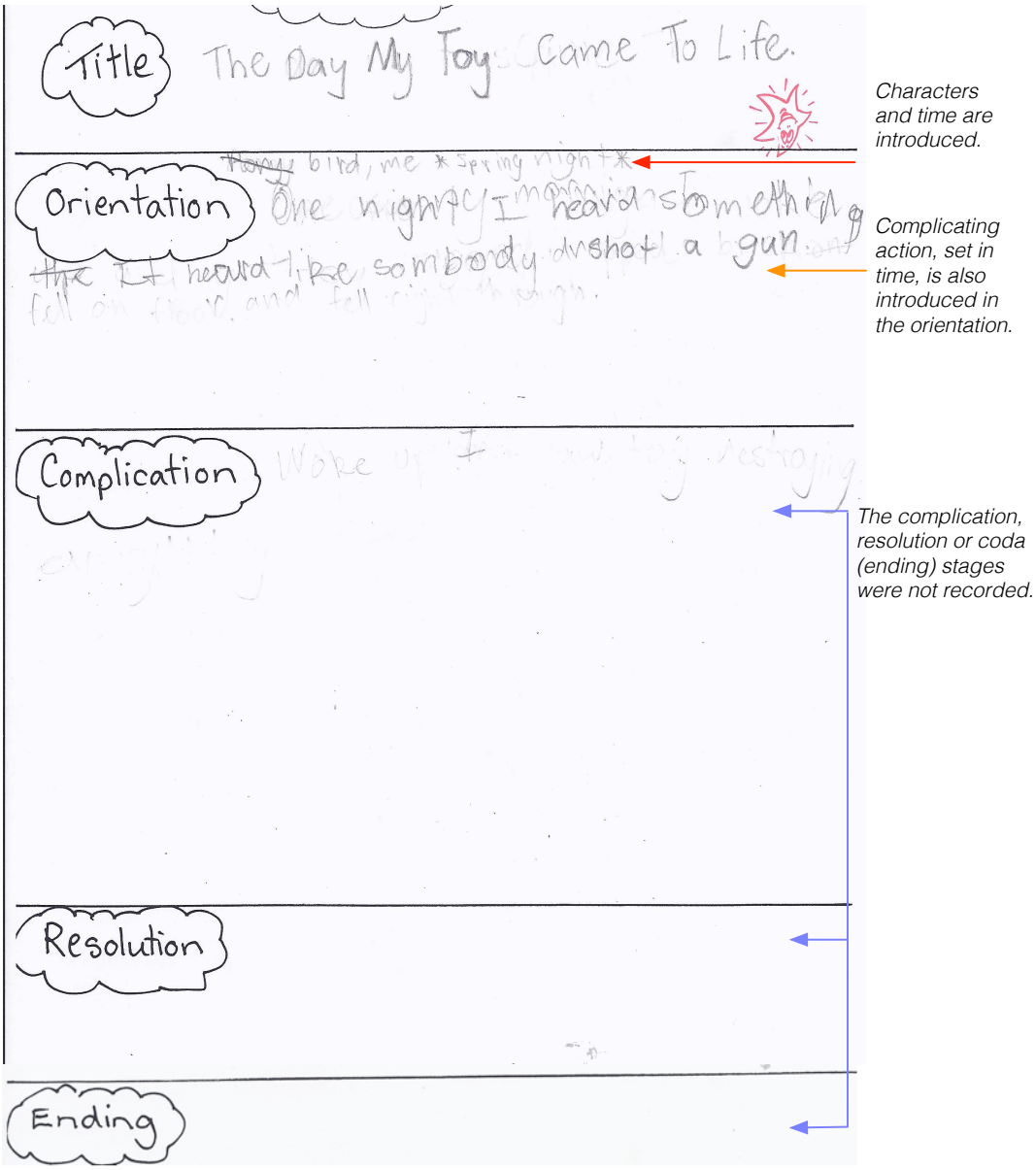


FIGURE 5.7: Pamela's planning page

5.4.5. Pamela's fantasy story about a magical toy

Notwithstanding the limitations of the planning page for Pamela, as Figure 5.8 shows, while she did not make use of the planning page provided to her to construct a prolific outline, by the end of the lesson she had completed an event–driven story including the four more predictable stages of narrative.

Pamela's story orientated readers to characters, labelled the setting and the action where she "went to the shops with her dad to buy a toy eagle." Her first complicating phase involved a disturbance in sleep. However, rather than being disturbed by an unusual movement, an abrupt noise "like somebody had shot a gun" was the centre of the interruption. This story aspect does not eventuate in her final version. With minimal elaboration on this event, the characters or setting, her story moved along through a series of causally–linked events.

The initial interruption to the norm escalated to a problem when Pamela, as a character in her story, had to "go check out what was happening." This complication stage has some development as it comprises of several escalating action phases that increase tension culminating in a chase scene. The chase involves a quick succession of causally linked actions. For example, the hawk "suddenly opened its wings" and starts chasing the protagonist. Her story includes a problem that is resolved simply, again, with minimal elaboration. That is, after the toy eagle was put to sleep, it was returned to its box and "switching it to good" to reverse its behaviour. Pamela then builds a brief coda (listed as the ending) by concluding, "from that day on everything was good. No more evil eagle just peace." The inclusion of this optional coda fulfils the generic requirements for a four–staged narrative. The event–driven narrative reflects her acknowledged difficulty in identifying characters' inner conflicts and struggles as complications in the narratives she reads. Despite the value placed on character's inner feelings and motives valued by her teacher, she did not use this resource to assist her compose.

Pamela's character choice and the actions were more reflective of her literary preferences about animals than the dolls and teddy bear described by her teacher or those provided in the 'Toy Story 3' film. For example, she creates a 'toy eagle' as the antagonist for her story. Her character selection illustrates how she reframes her personal preferences in order to create characters and events that meet the requirements of the topic provided by her teacher.

Pamela also used dialogue as a resource for her composition. She includes internal monologue to provide a summary of an event without having to dramatize it. For example she leads the audience to a complicating phase by writing, “I said to myself, I have to find the box it came in when I bought him” (Composition, November 2010). Pamela also used dialogue to justify her narrator’s actions, which leads to a resolution involving the character following instructions explained using direct speech as shown in the sentence, “It said you had to turn the switch to good. [She] did it.” As Berger (2009) argues, dialogue is the most common means to convey information indirectly to readers. While Mrs Millar discouraged her students from using direct speech, perhaps Pamela would benefit from further work on how to make effective shifts from more spoken to written narratives using indirect speech and internal monologues.

The day my toy came to life

Title and topic provided by teacher used as a resource.

On one spring morning I went to the shops with my dad and I bought a toy eagle for me.

Possible real-life experiences and places used as a resource.

On that night when I was sleeping I heard a noise (not just the noise a really loud noise). It was like somebody had shot a gun. It was coming from downstairs in the living room. I had to go check what was happening. But when I was in the kitchen ready to go in the living room, everything stopped, the noise had stopped everything had, I was so confused. Then I just saw my eagle, right on the floor, staring at me with his huge red eyes looking as though he was ready to attack. Suddenly he swung open his wings and flew off the ground and started chasing me. I said to myself "I have to find the box he came in when I bought him." There it was on the floor, I saw it when I was running. I quickly read it as fast as a hawk flying through the sky.

Preference for animal characters and their motivations used as a resource.

It said that you have to sing, so that's what I did. Two minutes after he was asleep. I read the box again. It said you had to turn the switch to good, I did it. Then from that day on everything was good. No more evil eagle just peace.

FIGURE 5.8: Pamela’s composition

Similar to Thomas, Pamela’s selection process involved combining resources in and across modes to create new meaning. Figure 5.9 illustrates the resources she used for her story and in doing so, highlights her significantly greater reliance on sources outside of those provided during the lesson than the other students. As with Thomas,

while her interest, selection and engagement in story aspects differed, Pamela was also involved in complex transformative and transductive work to evidence her ideas in writing.

5.4.6. Visual affordances used by Pamela to compose

In terms of the visual aspects that Mrs Millar incorporated when describing characters in her oral recount, Pamela applied these elements minimally for her composition. For example, Mrs Millar employed aspects of colour, texture, sound, size, movement and perspective to describe her toys. While these aspects were part of her teacher's conversation, the teacher did not explicitly draw Pamela's attention to these aspects. Pamela drew on size and colour to describe her character's "huge red eyes." However, she did not incorporate other denotative aspects of visual elements provided implicitly during the classroom conversation in her subsequent composition. It is argued that elements from colour can also be deployed to demonstrate rich and subtle effects of focalisation, ambience, pathos and graduation (Painter 2012a). Analysis of how these elements impacted Pamela's response to visual prompts for composing is discussed in chapter six.

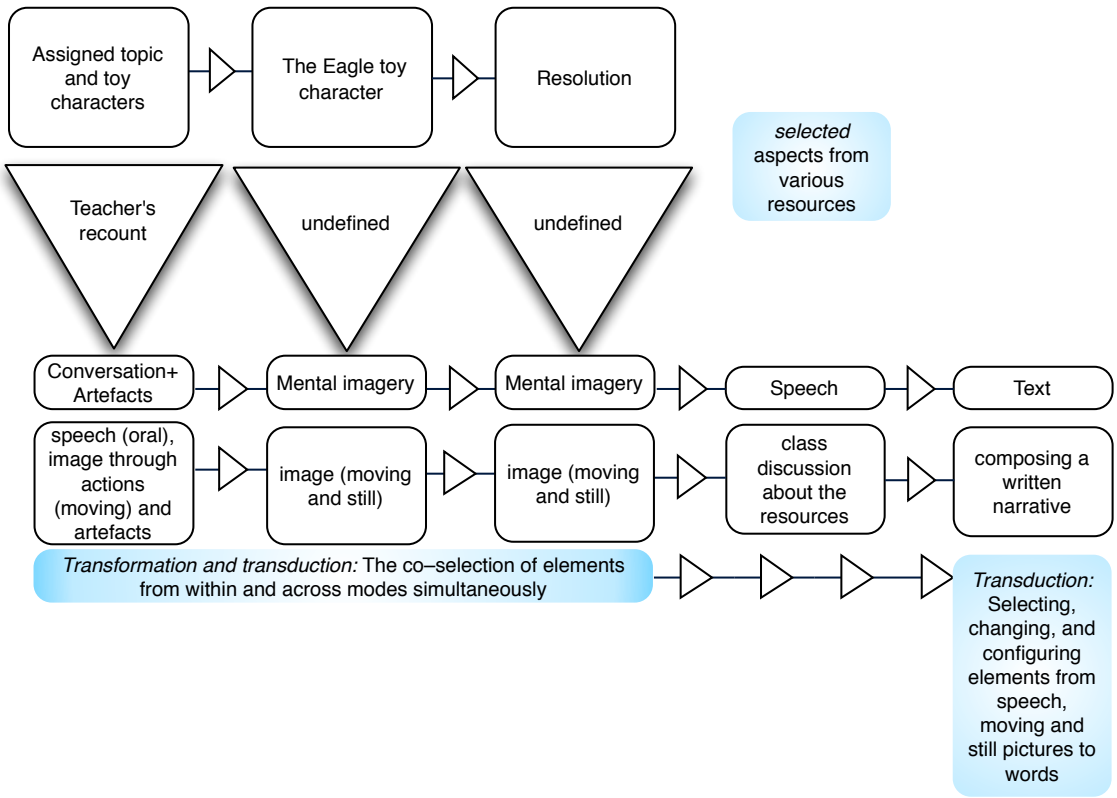


FIGURE 5.9: Pamela's process of translation

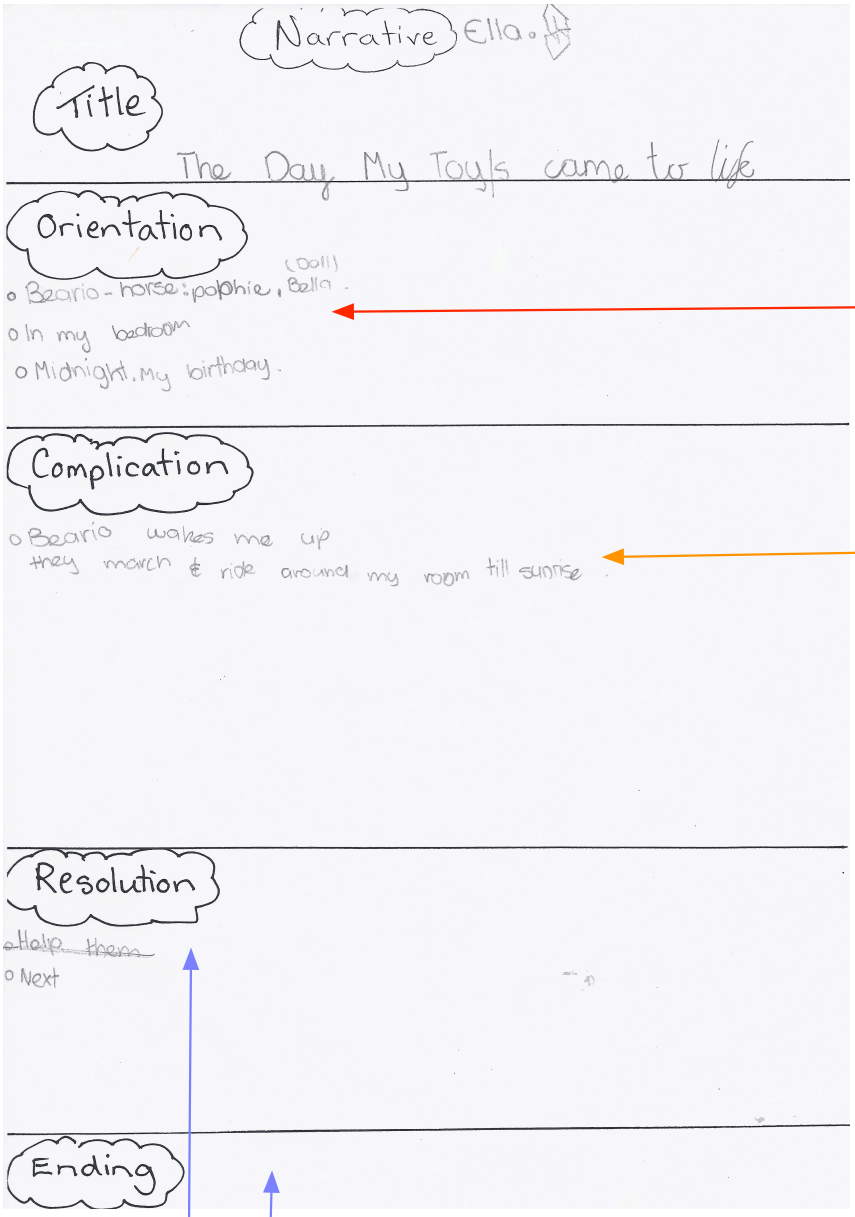
5.4.7. Ella's planning of a mystery story about toys

Ella stated in our initial individual interview that she enjoyed writing mysteries, also acknowledging that she found writing this type of story "pretty tricky" (Individual Interview November 2010). Interestingly, she used the resources provided to compose a mystery story during the writing lesson. Despite being provided with the same stimuli as Thomas and Pamela, Ella's interest in particular narrative components and mystery stories shaped her selections and positioned her to realise meanings differently from her peers. I predicted this would also be the case when she was invited to respond to NAPLAN writing assessment prompts.

Like her classmates, Ella was required to use the planning page as a resource to guide the organisational structure of her composition. After the ten-minutes allocated, Ella, like Pamela, entered into the story-writing phase of the lesson without having construed a resolution for her story (Figure 5.10). This reflects her earlier comments that she finds resolving mysteries challenging.

Ella's orientation plan includes place, time and circumstance for her story. Including herself as the character in her story, she lists familiar settings and events including her bedroom as the place where the event occurs and a typical birthday event for the complication to be enacted. She also lists other toy characters, "Polphie and Beario" as participants in her story. The first character, "Polphie," incorporates her acknowledged interest in animal characters. The second character, "Beario," resembles one of the teddy bear toys that her teacher had bought in to show during the oral recount, thus illustrating the influence from preferred literary characters and those provided during the lesson on character choice.

At this planning stage, the resources provided during the lesson seem not to have stimulated ideas for her in terms of creating a resolution or coda for her subsequent narrative. However, while the sections on the planning page were not complete, her story plan met the basic requirements for narrative as it included characters involved in causally connected events that were set in time and circumstance (Abbott 2009; Bakhtin 1981).



Characters, place and time are included in the orientation outline.

Complicating actions are selected.

The resolution and coda (ending) stages are not completed in the planning stage.

FIGURE: 5.10: Ella's planning page

5.4.8. Ella's mystery story about toys

As shown in Figure 5.11, the planning page provided enough of an outline to set Ella up for her writing resulting in significant sophisticated structures valued in national assessments marking criteria (ACARA 2010).

Unlike Thomas, who scripted his story closely from the plan, Ella used her planning page as a temporary guide to create a less canonical narrative structure than that postulated in the scaffold. That is, as shown in Figure 5.12, rather than beginning her

orientation with a detailed introduction of characters, setting and circumstance, her story begins by involving characters in a complicating action that disrupts the norm

The day my toys came to life

As I slept, I felt a movement in my bed. Was it a cockroach? What was it? Whatever it was it woke me up. As I turned over to see, I froze. It was the toy Beario my new favourite toy. I rubbed my eyes thinking I was going insane. But when I opened my eyes again, I saw the same thing. My toys had come to life.

Literature preference of 'mystery' and suspense used as a resource.

Toy bear artefact used as a resource.

Life experience as a resource

During the next couple of weeks every night at 12 o'clock midnight I would wake to the sound of my toys playing Scrabble; it was a favourite game. One night I awoke to the sound of neighing. As I looked, I saw my horse Polphie, with eyes as large as tomatoes and a nose shaped like a round nut. My mum must have heard this because she ran in like a mad woman. My toys fell to the ground. I copped a growling from Mum and a confiscation of long–legged Dylan; his dreadful nickname as he calls it. It was all my toys' fault. But then I wished I'd gotten rid of my toys. As I thought back to all times my toys helped me, I felt ashamed of that thought.

Preference for animal characters used as a resource.

Phase in the film 'Toy story' used as a resource.

On my next birthday, I thought back the whole year on the night of my ninth birthday; the day my toys came to life.

Literary preference to expose character motivation used as a resource.

Now as I sleep, I automatically wake up at midnight waiting for my toys to come to life. But they never do. I think back to how annoying it was to have my toys come to life. But my little secret is that I miss the excitement in my room at night.

A phase from 'The Indian in the Cupboard' used as a resource.

Literary preference for mystery and secrets used as a resource.

FIGURE 5.11: Ella's composition

. In the first sentence, Ella, as the main participant in the story, is woken from her sleep when she feels a movement in her bed. While this sentence introduces characters, place and circumstance in one sentence, her register choices in the orientation centre on the disrupting event, thus fitting an orientation which introduces characters, the state of things and the important time and location (Plum 1988a) with a high state of tension from the beginning. These choices illustrate two points. Firstly, by beginning with heightened tension, her story sets a fast pace and initiates suspense

early. Secondly, her deviation from the generic narrative structure provided indicates her skill in moving away from the narrative prototype. In doing so, she evidences a mature understanding about the flexibility and degrees of approximates of narrative (Labov & Waletzky 1967; Martin & Rothery 1981; Plum 1988a).

As Figure 5.12 illustrates, Ella connects a series of temporally sequenced events to effectively build tension throughout her story.

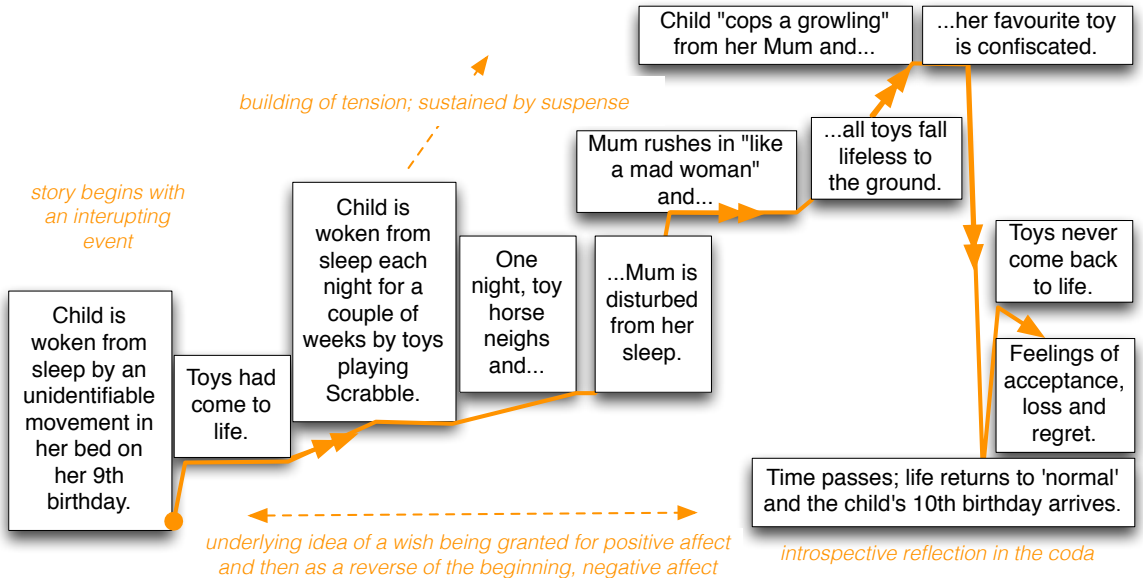


FIGURE 5.12: Waves of tension sustained by suspense in Ella's composition

The initial tension is sustained by suspense through a number of crisis–reaction phases driving the story forward. That is, beginning with the narrator's toys coming to life, the story unfolds a series of complicating phases leading to the peak of tension when the neighing horse wakes the mother from sleep. The tension falls sharply after the favourite toy is confiscated and life returns to "normal" extrapolated by the passing of "a whole year." This passing of time slows the story pace and culminates with an introspective reflection on the events that have taken place through a coda. This reflection uses a flashback, taking readers back to past events, and then returning them to the present (story) time. Ella carries this shift through the use of the narrator's monologue expressing regret about the outcome:

> I thought back the whole year on the night of my ninth birthday…
> Now as I sleep, I automatically wake at midnight waiting for my toys to come to life. But they never do. I think back to how annoying it was to

> have my toys come to life. But my little secret is that I miss the excitement in my room at night.
>
> Ella's Composition, November 2010.

Ella also links the narrator's emotional state with action responses; "I rubbed my eyes thinking I was going insane." In doing so, she foregrounds the emotional affect of the disruptions on her characters. These examples seem to reflect the value Mrs Millar placed on characters' inner feelings during the writing lesson when she encouraged students to make judgements about participants' behaviour, asking them to think how it might feel if in a similar situation:

> TE: Why do you think I wanted them to come alive? Think about it coming alive. How would you feel?
>
> Writing lesson observation notes, p 3, 11 November 2010

In regards to using characters provided in the stimulus, Ella seemed to purposefully choose aspects about characters and actions from other sources. For example, she chose characters' motives and feelings from the film, *'The Indian in the Cupboard'* (Oz 1995). In this fiction fantasy film, the young boy discovers a way to bring his toys to life over an extended period of time. During this time he would watch them play games in the secrecy of his bedroom. The story culminates with the boy's decision to leave his toys in their imaginary world. This character acknowledges the ethical merit of his decision but also shares missing the excitement of his toys playing together. Ella construes a similar coda by engaging with and selecting these components,

> For the next couple of weeks, every night at 12 o'clock midnight, I'd wake to the sound of my toys playing…now as I sleep I automatically wake up at midnight waiting for my toys to come to life. But they never do…but my little secret is [that] I miss the excitement in my room at night.
>
> Ella's Composition, 11 November 2010

The influence of a trailer from *Toy Story 3* shown in the lesson is evident in how Ella creates her narrative problem along with experiential content from the first Toy Story film not presented during the lesson. For example, she wrote that the character, "must've heard [the noise] because she ran in like a mad woman." As a result, [her] "toys fell to the ground" (Ella's Composition, November 2010). This event is similar to

an event that takes place during the first Toy Story film where toys come to life and play games such as “Scrabble” then collapse when the child’s mother rushes into the boy’s bedroom.

Like Thomas, Ella also drew on real life experiences or imitations of actual life events to craft her composition. For example, she included a realistic home setting, an experience of waking during the night and a typical celebratory birthday party as frames of reference for her mystery story. This approach reflects her understanding about the portrayal of truth and the use of “real stories” as resources for composing narrative, as she said in her interview,

> Well some narratives, they use part of a real story and then they use this to make up the rest.
>
> Individual interview, line 51, 17 November 2010

Figure 5.13 shows the aspects Ella selected, framed and recontextualised in and across modes undertaking transformative steps when working with film resources and then transductive steps pulling in ideas from her classroom discussion. These ideas were combined for her critical transductive step utilising her ideas for writing.

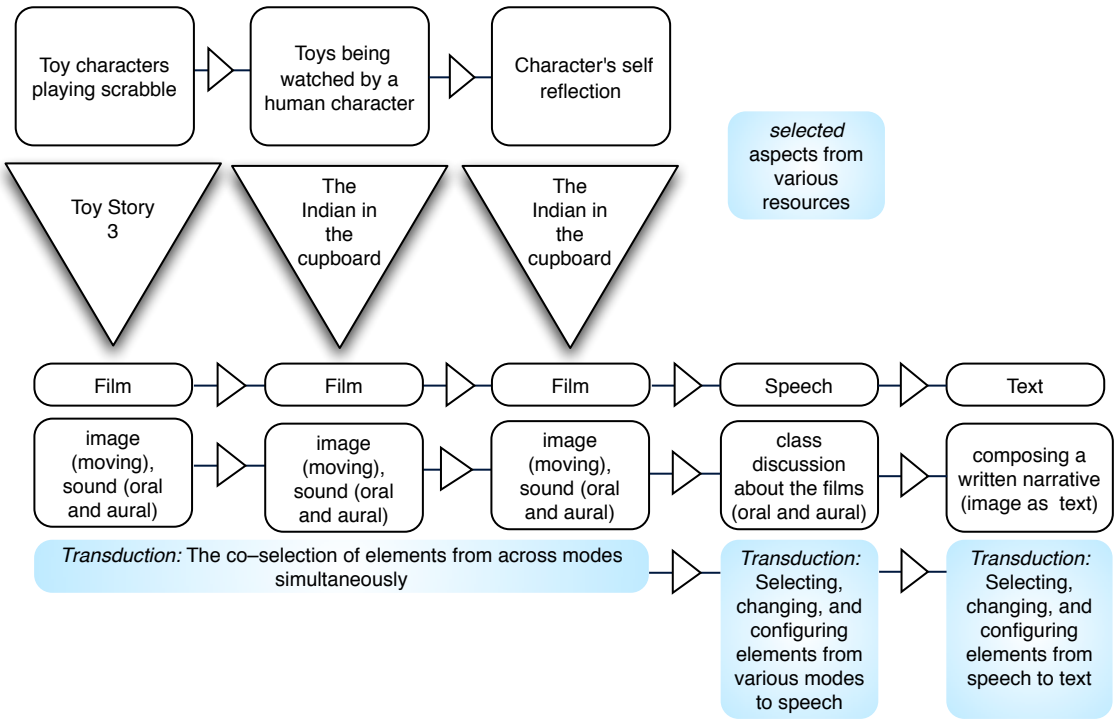


FIGURE 5.13: Ella’s translation of meaning within and across modes

The application of life–imitating events as a resource for narrative is recognised by a number of theorists. Bahktin (1981) argues that authors may depict real moments from their life or make allusions to them in order to realise new meaning for the world they depict in narrative. For Ella, using realistic celebrations such as birthdays and natural settings such as those typical in family homes evidences how she use naturalistic aspects from life to compose an imaginative text. The fictionality of narrative was less rigid for Ella than for the other students. While she described narrative as "something that had to made–up," she also recognised the use of real–life experiences as a basis for stories.

5.4.9. Visual affordances used by Ella to compose

As explained earlier in this chapter, Ella commented during our first individual interview how the author Emily Rodda's use of "creative use of words described things really well [and gave her] a better picture" of the story (Interview November 2010). In her own composition, it seemed she used description similarly in order to depict a character's motivations and reflections rather than for the purpose of enhancing characters' physical characteristics. Her choice of vocabulary therefore sought to portray emotional stances such as "copping a growling, feeling shame, insanity and annoyance." Her only reference to physical attributes using size and shape was when she described a toy horse "Polphie" as having "eyes as large as tomatoes and a nose shaped like a round nut." An examination of Ella's responses to these types of resources is undertaken in the following chapter.

5.5. Resources for composing narratives

Comparing Thomas, Pamela and Ella's compositions illustrates the different ways in which students engage with and select from resources to write. Through my analysis of the students' compositions in this chapter I demonstrated that these influenced how and what the students selected to include in their compositions.

The organisational structure of narrative at the whole text level featured in all the students' conversations as an important consideration for composing a "good story". They all identified the four more predictable stages of narrative – an orientation,

complication, a resolution and an ending[4] without being able to clearly articulate the optionality of the coda or the difference between this stage and a resolution. However, their interest in narrative stages and less predictable phases differed and their compositions reflected these preferences. As Figure 5.14 illustrates, Noah appeared to be more interested in the experiential function of narrative, focussing on the orientation in relation to building characters and a detailed place for them to carry out actions. In contrast, Thomas and Pamela's conversations about narratives they were reading indicated that they were drawn to the interpersonal function of stories that involved characters and the motives behind their actions. Ella, who had earlier discussed her enjoyment of reading how mysteries were solved, focussed rather on the interpersonal functions dealing with a character's inner feelings in her composition.

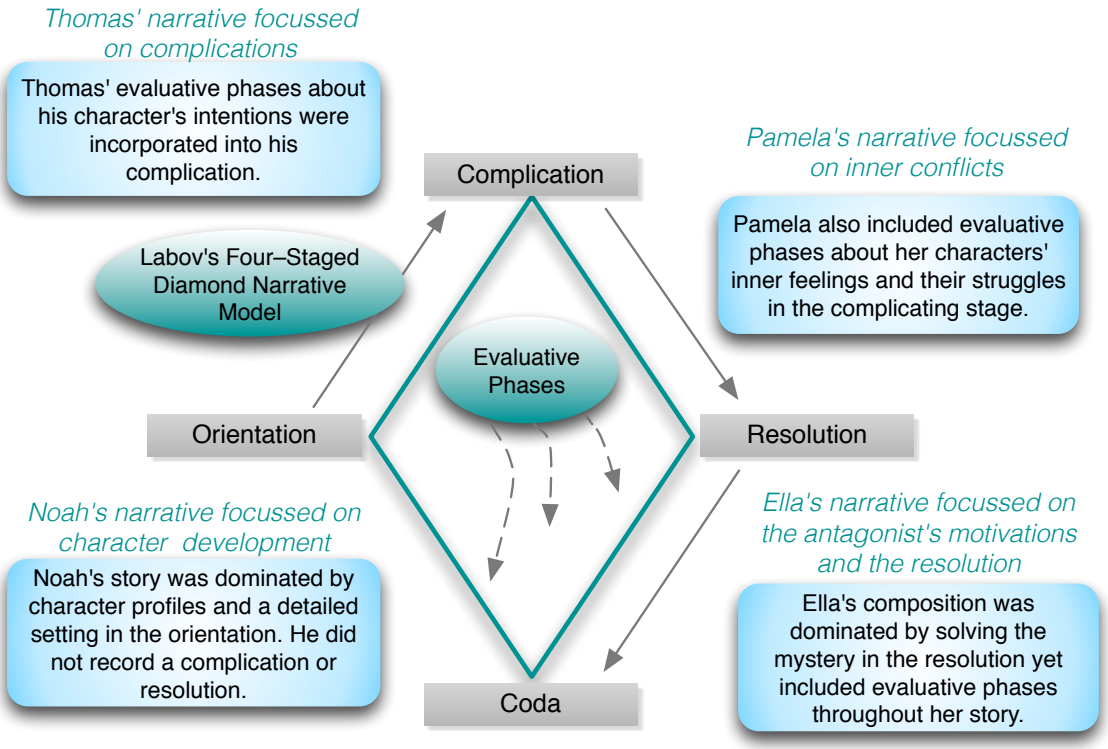


FIGURE 5.14: Students' varied interest in narrative stages

In my conversations with the students about the structure of the complex novels that they were reading, some were challenged by 'fitting' these with the archetype four–staged narrative provided during their writing lesson (Labov 1997; Plum 1988a). As we have seen, Pamela had difficulty identifying the more delicate action–reaction phases that disrupted the flow of events in the classic novel *Black Beauty*. Ella also articulated

[4] The coda stage was labelled by Mrs Millar as an 'ending.'

that problems in mystery stories had to be solved thus leaving the more complex forms, such as open-ended narratives, absent from her potential repertoire. While some form of reductionism is to be expected for younger students and a trajectory of writing development is accepted (Derewianka & Christie 2010), it appears that the malleable nature of narrative was not clear for these young students.

One of the fundamental characteristics of narratives is the inclusion of characters (Abbott 2009; Bakhtin 1981; Bal 1997; Plum 1988b) and the conversations about characters with Noah, Thomas, Pamela and Ella reflected this. However, each student was drawn to different features dealing with characterisation. For example, Noah was drawn to detailed physical descriptions of characters. In contrast to Noah, Thomas' character descriptions centred on their heroic actions, their experiences of sacrifice and loyalty that they portrayed when taking part in happenings. Pamela's approach differed again, centering on dialogue as an effective way to enact the tensions between characters and what characters were thinking. Ella's characterisation dealt with their motivations, inner feelings and ethics of their behaviour. Her evaluative stances, enacting character's inner feelings, were commonly used as a resource to connect her readers emotionally with the story. These individual interests impacted what the students selected from the prompts provided and what they chose to include in the writing that eventuated.

Description was another important feature of narrative that all students identified as helping them to "see" or "imagine" the story. However, each student identified different descriptive elements and used these elements in varying detail when they talked about and composed this type of text. For example, colour was an element nominated as a useful resource by all the students. However, the way they used colour differed. Noah and Ella used colour to describe what the characters looked like. Pamela used colour to describe setting. Yet colour is also acknowledged as a visual element useful for enacting interpersonal connections such as pathos, mood and ambience and assisting in organising elements on a page. Additional knowledge about the way visual elements function might assist students when they are puzzling out meaning potentials.

While not all that is available in prompts may be identified, used or in fact necessary meaning potentials to initiate ideas for composing, if students are struggling to interpret prompts provided, their reliance on prior knowledge about the topic was likely to be

needed. This was evident as students preferred to compose on subjects that they were familiar with as Thomas commented, “some topics suit me others are not so good.” These comments indicate that the representational meaning provided impacted the type and depth of students’ written responses.

The students in my study brought their understanding about the structural organisation of narrative, how they classified this text type, what they considered most important in a “good story” when interpreting resources provided. Their interest in particular aspects of narratives such as characters and actions prompted them to compose particular types of adventures and complications. I predicted that these factors would also influence how they interpreted visual assessment prompts and the role the visual prompts played in shaping the stories they composed using these resources.

Research on reading image identifies that being able to take part in the semiotic work of interpretation is significant for producing subsequent new meaning (Callow 2013; Kabuto 2104; Kress 2010). The students’ engagement with and selection of particular components again raises questions about students’ *choices* in and amongst resources in national writing assessment prompts. If students *identify* and then *choose* particular potential meanings that interest them, the impact of a prompt plays a significant role in their subsequent writing. But it is how and what students look for that is of interest in this study. For instance, if a prompt offers limited components that a student identifies or is interested in, their writing may be negatively impacted. Likewise, if their choices are confined by what they *identify* as familiar or interesting to them, the full potential of meanings made available in the prompt may remain uncommunicated and, irrespective of what they choose to accept or utilise from their interpretations, limited identification of meaning potentials may impact negatively on their subsequent compositions.

The classrooms for these four students were visually rich with multiple resources provided to select from. The use of more than one mode such as visual, aural, gestural and oral to create narrative is argued to have the potential of enriching the productive and perceptive opportunities for storytelling (Berger 1997; Lankshear 1997). However, the interpretive work required to interpret across modes was not always automatic or simple and required a language to talk about the narrative being represented. Myhill’s (2010) research on the writing process with secondary students is also useful to draw on in order to understand what was happening for these students in their lesson. Myhill’s (2010) cites Hayes and Flowers (1980) to describe the act of ‘juggling a

number of simultaneous constraints' when composing. This aptly describes what happened for these younger students when they were required to work with a proposed genre structure, combine their interpretations from various semiotic stimuli such as 2D film, 3D toys, oral stories *and* utilise their prior experiences for the act of composing narrative. What I would argue is how complex the process of translation is, and that it is not all of one piece, nor is it the same for all students. The transformative and transductive steps they take to translate meaning are literacy demands of a task that impact the interpretive process. Providing students with the tools for working in and across visual modes is particularly critical if we are to prepare students along their developmental journey of learning to read, write and view narratives in and out of school practices (Callow 2008; Cazden et al. 1996; Hoffmann 2011; Kress 2010).

In relation to the use of visual prompts in writing assessments, we know that assessment is a component of instruction and "not an end unto itself" (Higgins & Miller 2006, p 311). However, if the visual prompts used in writing assessments are to be effective, we have to be clear about what the prompt is demanding of students, what is reasonable to ask of young novice writers and how it reflects curriculum relevant for their stage of learning. The following chapter examines how the four apprentice writers in my study responded to the types of visual prompts provided in NAPLAN narrative writing assessments.

Chapter six

The place of a metalanguage in learning to read narrative images

As a next step in my research, I wanted to introduce the students to visual writing assessment prompts used in past BST and NAPLAN texts in order to investigate how Noah, Thomas, Pamela and Ella undertook the process of translation when working with a prompt they had identified as challenging. Understanding the role these prompts play in students' writing is central to my investigation considering the consistent use of a visual stimulus in large–scale writing assessments. In order to do this, I drew on data collected from the conversations students had when reading visual assessment prompts during a second classroom–writing lesson and from data collected during an interview with Noah undertaken during the pilot study.

This chapter also examines the place of a metalanguage in learning how to read the types of images provided in visual writing assessment prompts. I adopted an action–orientated approach for this component of my study, where I revisited the BST and NAPLAN writing prompts with the students during a group session. During this intervention phase, the students and I talked about the visual prompts guided by a metalanguage utilising the educational scaffold detailed in chapter three. However a subsequent writing task did not follow this conversation due to the extended time required for talking with the students about the images using the visual categories in a single intervention phase.

The impact of this educational metalanguage for interpreting challenging prompts is discussed. I would argue that reading image requires developing students' knowledge about how meaning is made in image and skills to apply this knowledge in order to undertake transformative and transductive processes for reading a narrative image. In relation to the skill required of the students to read image in large–scale writing assessments, they reported a richer understanding of the interactional meanings offered by pictures when using a language to guide their interpretation of a challenging NAPLAN writing assessment prompt.

6.1. A second writing lesson: Responding to past visual writing assessment prompts

In the second writing lesson I observed, Mrs Millar's approach differed from that in her previous writing lesson because the focus was on collecting data about identifying the types of prompts the students found difficult to interpret, what visual aspects from the prompts they talked about when making their selection and what aspects of narrative they focussed on to direct their view. The teacher and I had previously decided that she would provide the students with past BST and NAPLAN writing assessment prompts as stimulus for composing during a second forty-minute writing lesson and this influenced the approach of her lesson.

Rather than an extensive introduction about a topic using a number of visual prompts, the teacher introduced this lesson by explaining the purpose of visual prompts in NAPLAN writing assessments and the prompt selection task for this lesson. The body of the lesson then involved the students working in small groups, where each group was provided with sets of copied past BST and NAPLAN writing prompts. The students were then asked to talk about the prompts amongst themselves and choose one that would be most difficult to interpret.

Thomas, Pamela and Ella were organised into one group so I was able to sit in close proximity taking observational notes while they undertook the activity. After spending a few minutes looking at the selection of prompts on their desk, Thomas picked up 'The Box' prompt and initiated a conversation by stating, "it's just a box" which was responded to immediately by Ella, "but I can't see inside it" (Observation notes December 2010). They both decided this prompt was the "hardest to do" and while Pamela made no verbal contribution, her gestured nodding suggested she agreed with their choice. After 'The Box' had been singled out as the most difficult, they had very little more to say about the prompt. Rather they spent the remaining time talking about unrelated subjects such as their weekend activities. For these three students, a decision came quickly with minimal sifting, conversing or justifying their choice.

After ten minutes, the class reconvened and the teacher–led discussion about their choices revealed that the students in her class had overwhelmingly chosen the NAPLAN prompt 'The Box' as the most challenging (Figure 6.1). The overall reasons provided by the class indicated that limited meaning potentials available in 'The Box'

did “not give them enough” to construe a story, with others explaining that they “did not understand the task” (Teacher email and observational notes December 2010).

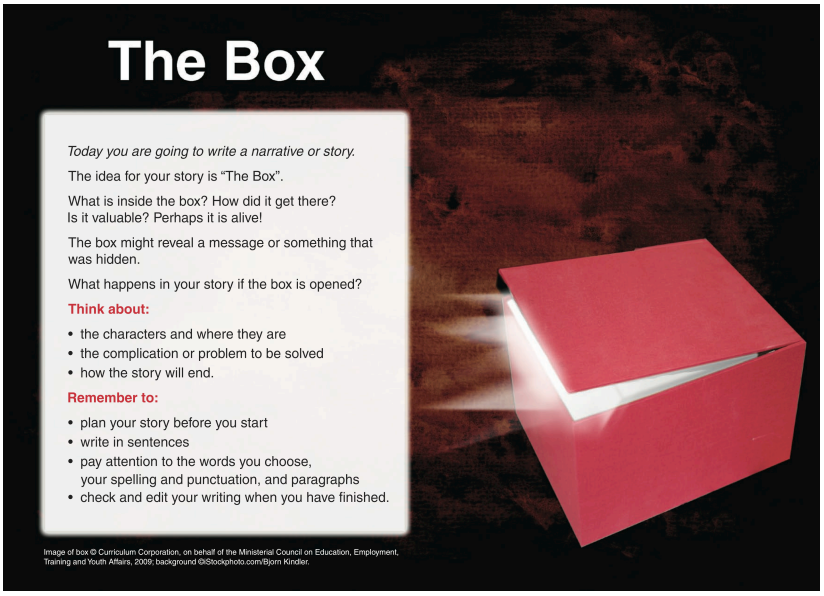


FIGURE 6.1: The 2009 NAPLAN writing prompt

After the class discussion, the teacher instructed the students to reconvene in their groups, talk about the visual prompt they had chosen, and individually plan a story using their generated ideas. The following section details this process, how the students came to their decision and made use of the planning time.

As with the previous writing lesson described in chapter five, the three students exhibited various avoidance strategies before entering into a conversation about the writing prompt. Thomas spent more than half of the planning time sharpening his pencil at the classroom bin and standing behind his desk looking around the room. At the same time, Pamela leaned her head on her fist, looking at the prompt and scanning back to the planning page provided. Ella tidied her desk, organising her space and planning page as if getting ready to compose. It was only towards the end of the planning time that these students began talking about ‘The Box.’ Their conversation about the prompt they had chosen remained brief:

P: I don’t know if I will write that it is red because it isn’t important.

E: But it is red and there is a shining white light coming out of it.

T: Yeah. The box is in a dark room. It doesn’t look like an ancient box.

P: The ancient box looks dirty and the other one looks clean.

> Te: Okay. That's your planning time…you are going to write without speaking. You do this on your own. It's not a group effort.
> T: Well I am not very good at writing what they are doing [whispers].
> Observation Notes Writing Lesson Two, 22 November 2010

In alignment with the ten minutes provided for planning in the NAPLAN assessments, Thomas, Pamela and Ella had identified a few, simple and denotative meanings about the picture without crafting sufficient ideas related to a central storyline. Neither had they recorded a plan for their narrative on the scaffold page provided. After selecting, talking and planning from a difficult visual prompt during additional planning time provided, these students entered into the independent story–writing phase without a clear direction as to where their story would start or was heading.

To return to the pilot study, Noah also selected 'The Box' prompt as the most difficult to interpret. He required considerably more thinking and talking time than the five–minutes allocated by the NAPLAN writing assessment regime before he could begin to compose his story. It took a forty–minute interview with substantial prompting to elicit minimal conversation from him about this prompt. In fact, if he was required to compose a narrative using this prompt during the forty–minute timed NAPLAN writing assessment, the majority of his time would have been spent on puzzling out the visual prompt without planning or composing a narrative. Similar to Thomas, Pamela and Ella, when Noah was unsupported, more time equated to the same blank space on his page, lengthy pauses, verbal sighing and questioning from a boy who was so keen to achieve yet frustrated by the visual prompt provided to him. Without considerable prompting, it was highly likely that this talented student would not have 'put pen to paper.' When asked to record his story plan, he picked up his pen and pressed it into the piece of paper. After staring at the blank page for nearly a minute, he then put down the pen, sat away from the paper, folded his arms and said:

> Okay. I don't really know what to write about. I don't know what to do first. Something. I know it has to be something. Something for the orientation but I don't know what.
> Interview 18 May 2010, lines 16-17; 23-25

Thus, additional time for these students had not resulted in an effective plan the majority of the allocated time was taken up with diversionary behaviours without a story

plan being created. This suggests that as novice readers of image, presented with a difficult prompt their interpretation was limited and extra time did not result in additional meaning being construed. These findings concur with Macken Horarik (2008) who argues additional time to complete an assessment, as a lone factor, does not equate to improved outcomes. For these students, additional time was of no benefit when landed with a visual stimulus that they could not effectively 'read' or use for creating their own story.

6.2. Responding to a difficult prompt: "It's hard to write about a box"

All four students selected 'The Box' prompt as the most difficult to utilise for construing a story. This section describes what was difficult for these students when working with this prompt during the second writing lesson, and in the case of Noah, during an individual interview. The data revealed that the students experienced difficulty in construing story aspects from the stimulus, impacting the quality and quantity of ideas they generated for composing. A comment from Noah summates one of the challenges all the students experienced with the topic provided, "It's hard to write about a box…like just about a box" (Interview May 2010, lines 19,22). From the analyses of the second writing lesson and the individual interview about 'The Box' prompt, two overarching findings dealing with what interested the students, engaged them and what eventuated in their interpretation were identified. These findings deal with the students' limited identification of representational meaning and a reliance on the familiar.

6.2.1. Limited engagement with representational meaning

What seemed most difficult for students was making a connection with the object represented in 'The Box' prompt. As a first step in the translation process, the single object failed to interest them leading to limited engagement with the object and the happening depicted. Noah explained that 'The Box' (ACARA 2009) prompt was most challenging preferring prompts like 'Found' (ACARA 2008) because "the box prompt [has to] include definitely a box, but with 'Found' it can be about anything" (Pilot Study Interview May 2010). For him, the limited representation offered by the picture aspect in 'The Box' left him with restricted choice for construing a story.

When unable to engage with meaning potentials in the non–linguistic aspect of this prompt, Noah sought assistance from the words explaining that, "sometimes if people read the instructions they get an idea of the picture" (Pilot Study Interview May 2010).

As illustrated in Figure 6.2, he used this strategy when working with ‘The Box’ prompt by referring to the title, “The Box” then the instructional information such as “think about and remember to then the copyright symbol on the page.

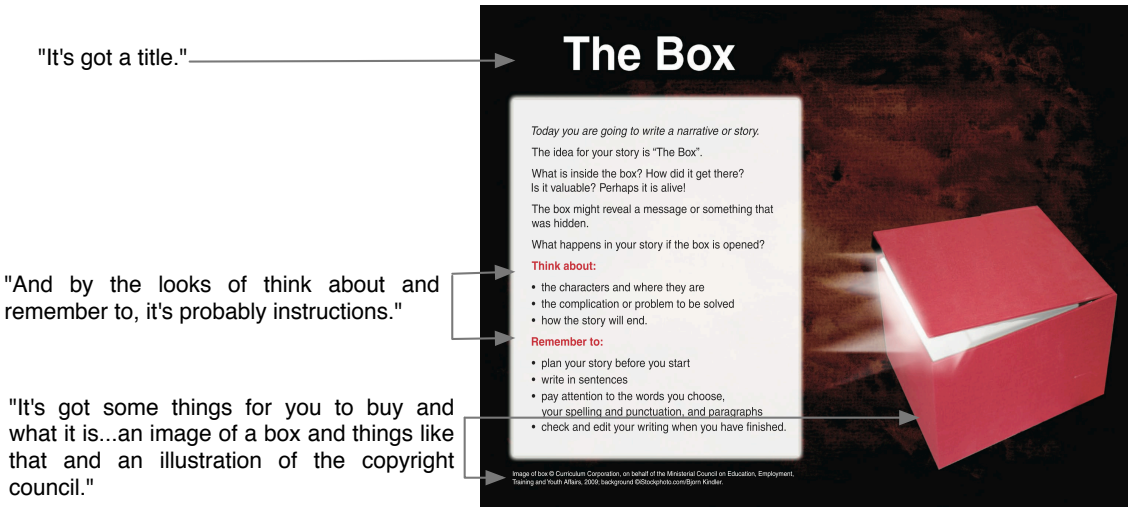


FIGURE 6.2: Linguistic and non–linguistic visual resources in the 2009 NAPLAN writing prompt

Unlike other BST assessment prompts that provide words in complementarity with the non–linguistic story shown, the words in ‘The Box’ prompt offered more instructional rather than narrative information, leaving the picture as the most salient communicator of the story aspects. In search of narrative aspects from the linguistic resource Noah identified the numbers and copyright symbol on the page as narrative storylines inferring these objects were “things for you to buy,” ending his description about the prompt by commenting that “it’s hard to describe it” (Pilot Study Interview, May 2010).

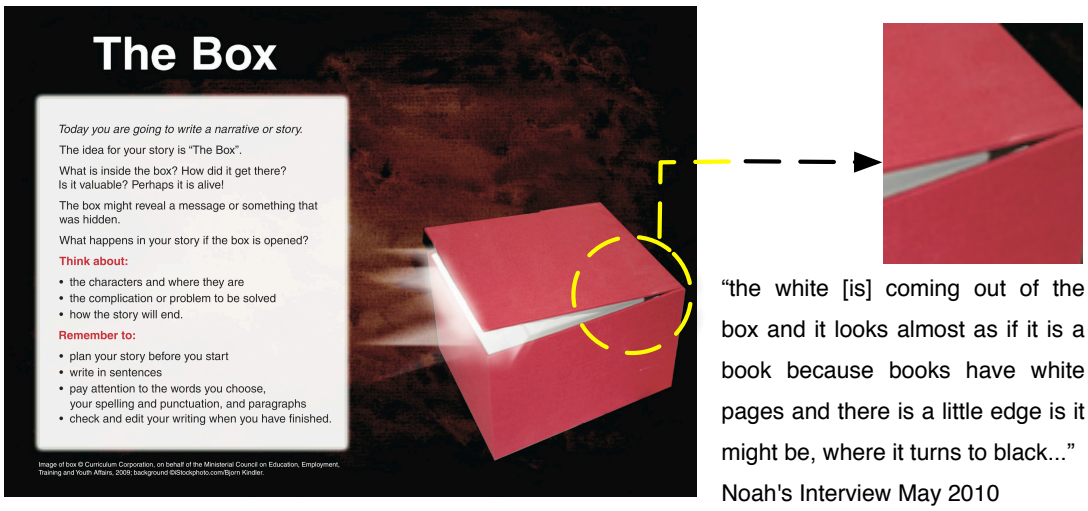
While Noah sought information from the linguistic visual semiotic, the three other students remained focussed on the picture aspect of ‘The Box’. However, as with Noah, after identifying the main object and the action of light coming out of the box, there seemed little for the readers to ‘grab onto’ in the picture for construing a narrative story. After a brief acknowledgement that the picture represented a red box, little conversation transpired and no story plan was recorded on the scaffold provided during their writing lessons.

While visual texts may well have the ability to communicate meaning, these students required further skills to identify, navigate and take up meaning potentials in this type of visual stimulus. The findings show that ‘The Box’ represented did not engage these students, impacting the ideas they produced for their story.

6.2.2. Selecting visual categories and elements for transforming meaning

Despite the students' difficulties with 'The Box' prompt, they were involved in selecting visual categories and finer elements within those categories for the process of transformation. The category of colour was immediately recognised by all students, suggesting this visual aspect was the most salient for them. While they all used colour to label the object 'red', they engaged with different finer colour attributes. For Noah, colour contrast was central to his conversation about 'The Box'. As illustrated in Figure 6.3, he discussed colour contrast in the picture stating that, "black and white are inverted colours so it stands out and it looks very effective." Noah linked this colour aspect to infer that the contents of the box "looked like a book."

Colour functioned to represent a 'red box' for Thomas and Pamela. However, the importance attributed to colour by these students differed from Noah. While drawing some initial interest for Thomas, after acknowledging the red colour of the box, he did not refer to this visual aspect again. Despite Pamela's initial interest in the colour of the box, she remained undecided whether to include colour in her 'box' story at all "because it wasn't important" (Observation Notes Writing Lesson Two December 2010). Ella engaged with the way colour evoked agency of some kind. That is, she replied to Pamela's uncertainty about including colour commenting, "but it is red and there is a shining white light coming out" (Interview Two December 2010).



"the white [is] coming out of the box and it looks almost as if it is a book because books have white pages and there is a little edge is it might be, where it turns to black..."
Noah's Interview May 2010

FIGURE 6.3: Noah's intra–semiotic work with the 2009 NAPLAN prompt

Importantly, while the relative importance of colour varied amongst the students, it seemed this visual attribute orientated them to what else was around to read indicating that they were drawn to colour as a salient visual attribute to begin their transformative

process. Other than the aforementioned acknowledgements to colour, the wider range of colour elements offering meaning potentials such as the low degree of colour differentiation or the high degree of colour saturation were not talked about or used. So while this element was salient, their recognition of a range of possible meaning potentials was limited thus restricting other possible interpretations by recognising only the familiar. For instance, minimally differentiated and highly saturated colours are often used to move an object from reality into a world of dream or fantasy. However, these aspects like other potentials evoked in the prompt were not identified or taken up.

One of the most commonly researched visual elements throughout the literature is colour in terms of its significance as a learning assistant and its influence on engagement and motivation. A qualitative study by Longo (2001) found that high school science students were able to better recall and remember concepts and facts that use the visual element of colour to represent information. Longo's study demonstrated how colour is an effective memory assistant that increases students' understanding of both written data and the concepts when summarizing nonfiction science texts. Research by Heij, Boelens and Akerboom (2013) with younger children between five to eight year of age, identified colour was integrated into the representational function of the picture. Their findings suggest that children of this age possess the necessary skills to apply knowledge about colour attributes within an image when cues are provided to assist them separate different visual aspects. Considering Noah, Thomas, Pamela and Ella's interest in colour, these results suggest providing them with strategies for identifying a wider range of colour attributes might assist them to evoke richer responses.

For the students in my study, working with limited visual material in 'The Box' prompt posed challenges for them and so with little to interpret, they were unable to develop their story storylines. I argue that explicit strategies for accessing and using the potentials offered in difficult prompts like 'The Box' might assist a more meaningful engagement with unfamiliar and abstract prompt topics.

6.3.Responding to visual writing assessment prompts

The teacher and I planned for the students to undertake a third writing lesson using independently construed meanings form 'The Box' prompt for composing. My role

during this lesson had been arranged as that of observer so that I could collect data about how they moved through the transformative process collecting visual categories for construing meaning. However, after my second visit, the teacher, in response to students' difficulty with 'The Box' prompt, pre-empted an intervention to support her students' interpretation. Therefore while the students originally identified 'The Box' prompt as the most difficult and an initial conversation about 'The Box' prompt during the second writing lesson had occurred, this meant I needed to work with another prompt to closely observe how students worked to puzzle out a prompt that challenged them without guidance. While unexpected at the time, the teacher's unplanned intervention offered me the opportunity to observe the students as they selected another prompt, compare the reasons for their choice and observe how they worked through the process of translation without guidance.

Considering Mrs Millar's decision to talk further with the students about 'The Box' prompt, I conducted a focus interview in order to investigate how the students puzzled out meanings from other 'difficult' prompts. Investigating how students initiate their transformative work and how they overcame their challenges assisted my understanding about how to support students as they work with the unfamiliar in these types of stimuli.

In this focus interview I provided Thomas, Pamela and Ella with the same selection of visual assessment prompts they had talked about during their second writing lesson. So that they were not influenced by each other's choices, they each chose a difficult prompt and then came together to talk about their choices. Interestingly, 'The Box' prompt had been overlooked with all three students choosing 'Found' (ACARA 2008) as the most difficult. It seemed that an earlier guided conversation with their teacher about 'The Box' prompt had reduced the complexity of translation for these students. An important point to make is that use of a metalanguage to talk about visual aspects had a significant effect on the students' interpretation of a challenging prompt.

After each interview, I transcribed the recorded meetings and generated an overall description of each interview. I repeated this process for the observation notes taken during the writing lessons. I then used a manual colour coding process to identify and highlight predetermined and emerging patterns (Bogdan & Biklen 1992; Creswell 2007; Yin 2009). I used the colour coding to identify which visual categories from the educational scaffold that the students used and the frequency of use when they talked

about stories and reading image. I also used colour coding to generate a number of themes about the subjects and the strategies each student used to undertake the process of translation discussed during each interview. I then correlated these themes amongst the interviews (Creswell 2007). I also linked these themes with the visual categories that the students selected from the recontextualised educational scaffold (Figure 6.11). These key findings became the sub headings selected to discuss the data in this chapter.

From the analyses of the students' conversations about difficult prompts, four key findings emerged. Analyses of the data indicated that the students favoured objects and events that were familiar to them, being able to engage more easily with the content and chain meaning within and across pictures. However, they became stranded in the familiar and when presented with an unknown topic they were unable to move into unfamiliar territory. As a result, the more unfamiliar the pictures were to the students, the greater number of interruptions in the translative process, impacting the quantity and quality of interpretations. The fourth finding relates to the prompt design. The more complex the compositional design, the more complex the process of translation. These findings are now explored in detail.

6.3.1. Stranded in the familiar

An overarching difficulty experienced by the students was dealing with unfamiliar content in visual prompts. Rather predictably, what students did talk about in relation to the prompts were aspects they connected with. The familiarity took different forms: a connection with personal experience; similarity of objects to those in their lives; similar literary preferences or stories they had been previously asked to write about. These different forms of familiarity are evident in the following exchange.

> R: Why would you find the prompt 'Found' the most difficult?
>
> P: Well like I don't really do stories, like clue stories.
>
> T: Yeah, I'm not good at them.
>
> E: Well like that one (pointing to the storm prompt), I've like done that one before.
>
> T: Yeah, I've done a lot of those (pointing to the storm).
>
> R: The Storm?
>
> T: Yeah.
>
> R: What type of story do you call the storm?

T: It's an inside narrative. Like you are only going to be inside.

E: I've like experienced something like that before.

P: Yeah like when I'm in my house we get weird weather and stuff so it's pretty easy.

R: Well if you have experienced something like the storm before, why did you find the egg prompt easy?

T: Well when I looked at the picture it was obvious that it was an egg and that it was a magical egg.

P: Something's coming out.

Focus Interview, 7 December 2010, lines 97–112, 115

Similarly across 'easy' prompts meanings were recognisably more "obvious". For instance 'What a Mess!' was chosen as a preferred prompt because, "it [was] about what you can do at home." As the following excerpt shows, the students could tap into meaning potentials connected to their everyday lives because we write from what we know and identify what we have already seen more readily.

P: Those pictures are easy to know.

E: Yeah.

T: Yeah.

E: It's like easy for me to use the story. That's why I chose that one as easy [point to the prompt 'What a mess'].

T: Yeh and this one [points to the prompt 'What a mess'] is about what you can do at home.

P: Like with the piggy bank. It's obvious that someone has dropped it.

T: Like because that's what some bedrooms look like and you've like seen it.

P: Yeah like it's easy to tap into it. Like it's happened to us.

E: We've got the same as that so you can write about it.

P: But with this one [picks up the prompt 'Found']. I've never had this.

Focus Interview 7 December 2010, lines 221–225, 244–246

As Pamela and Ella comments indicate the less familiar they are with the content, the more challenging the prompt. For example, in prompts chosen as difficult such as 'Found,' (Figure 6.4), a larger proportion of the pictures were unfamiliar to the students. In this instance, a significant number of objects, characters and actions were

unidentifiable to the students. One example of the difficulties they experienced was illustrated when Thomas identified the magnifying glass as a “bubble” dismissing this image because he was “no good with bubbles.” Similarly, after trying to make sense of the same picture Ella was left perplexed saying, “Well I just don’t know what it is.” These examples show that when presented with out of the ordinary content, the students had difficulty identifying narrative representations.

Incorrect identification with limited experience about this object
T: I'm no good with bubbles.
E: Well I don't know what it is.
P: Is that just a sign or something? Or is he like holding something? Like there, you can't really see it.
E: What's it there for? It's a word. Do I have to solve it or something?

Correct identification using prior knowledge about the object
T: I said this was a camera, I think?

Correct identification relating object with life experience
E: I think a collar would look exactly like that. My cousin's friend has a dog with a collar just like that.
R: You said this was a ring Thomas. Why?
T: Cause of the size.

Drawing on intra-semiotic relations amongst the pictures
P: To be honest, I don't really know what this is.
T: It's like a bug skeleton.
P: Yeah but I don't know what kind of bug. They are using like an x-ray thingo?
E: A telescope thing. They might use that.
R: A microscope?
P: Yeah, that thing.

Drawing on inter-semiotic relations across pictures and words
E: It's a bag thing with writing on it but I don't know what it says.

FIGURE 6.4: Working with unfamiliar objects in a challenging prompt

Unrecognisable images were not isolated to difficult prompts; visual aspects within prompts chosen as easy to interpret also challenged students. For example, Thomas, Ella and Pamela explained that they preferred the prompt ‘What a Mess!’ because it

contained events that had “happened” to them. When they talked about the depictions, familiar realistic events, places and objects such as the broken piggy bank, the messy bedroom and the muddy boots were identified. These aspects were quickly labelled and glossed over. However, amongst these familiar depictions were less recognisable portrayals, which they spent considerable time trying to identify. One such picture was the anthropoid fossil. This picture generated considerable conversation amongst the students. After trying to make sense of this drawing by talking about possible uses for objects and their whereabouts, Thomas identified the object as “a bug skeleton,” Pamela was left puzzled by this picture stating, “to be honest I don’t really know what this is” and Ella remained concerned she was unable to classify the “skeleton” (Focus Interview December 2010).

While all students preferred prompts with familiar content, what was favoured differed amongst them. That is, while Noah chose ‘Found’ prompt as an easy option because “it could be about anything” (Individual interview May 2010), Thomas, Pamela and Ella chose this prompt as most difficult. These differences are not unexpected considering the students’ different backgrounds, literary and life experiences. However, this finding does foreground the point that a common visual prompt might not engage all students particularly considering the large scale of current national writing assessments.

Colour again featured as a familiar and salient visual attribute identified by the students. From the beginning of the students’ conversation about the prompts, colour immediately drew their attention. As the following excerpt shows, when the students talked about ‘The Egg’, their attention was drawn to various finer elements of colour including hue, brightness and illumination, which assisted in their process of translation. In this prompt, colour aspects were combined to identify representational meaning dealing with characters, setting and actions.

> P: It’s like opening there. It has a crack.
>
> R: What’s in the middle of the crack?
>
> P: A glowing green something.
>
> E: There’s like a green dot in there. It’s like in the sea.
>
> P: Yeh there’s a whole lot of green stuff and you can see when its opening you can see something green. So it has to be like [long pause]
>
> T: It could be like monster.

P: Yeah, like something green like from the sea. It might be a magical egg.

T: It could just be a normal egg.

Focus Interview 7 December 2010, lines 123-137, 179-181

Finer aspects of colour were also used to describe characters and objects in the other prompts. For instance, in 'Found' Thomas and Ella used colour attributes to identify the "skin colour" (Interview December 2010) of the human characters in the pictures. Thomas also drew on colour when he labelled items such as the "silver bracelet."

It is widely understood across disciplines that colour means and that it means in different ways to individuals, groups and amongst societies (Horrocks 2012; Kress 2002; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006). While this aspect was consistency used by the students I argue that their use was minimal in terms of what was offered by the prompts and that further extrapolation on how colour functions to depict, enact and compose meaning would assist the students to provide a more conscious and critical interpretation of the non–linguistic visual semiotic.

With emerging strategies and language to unpack unknown images, the student participants preferred to stay with familiar topics represented visually. What was familiar in the pictures was limited thus, when presented with unfamiliar visual content the students were often left stranded in the familiar, unable to move effectively into new territory. Considering the differences amongst these four young apprentice readers and writers and the impact unfamiliar content had on the ideas generated, the visual prompts provided in national writing assessments are likely to play a significant role in students' written responses and thus need to be considered as a factor influencing writing outcomes.

6.3.2. Engaging with the familiar for chaining meaning

This section centres on how the students engaged with 'familiar' content in the writing prompts to realise meaning. The previous section described how students preferred to engage with the familiar in writing assessment prompts. As a first step in the process of transformation, the students' initial attention was drawn to recognisable visual aspects. However, these aspects were not used in isolation. Rather, students chained visual elements together with other categories to build realisation. Their attention was initially drawn to the most familiar or salient visual element, such as colour, which led

them to another visual aspect such as line or shape, in a chain–like action process. An example of the chaining together of visual aspects is illustrated during a conversation with Thomas about 'The Egg' prompt. As the following excerpt and accompanying Figure 6.5 shows, Thomas' attention was first drawn to the main object represented; an egg. He then talked about specific visual elements within the egg including colour, moving onto shape and linking these visual aspects with lines or what he termed "markings". These visual elements acted in unison contributing to his interpretation of the object depicted. By combining these visual elements he construed that the egg was imaginary, involving a participant, which he identified as a "monster" hatching out of the "opening egg." He inferred the use of lines and light evoked "something magical".

T: Well when I looked at the picture it was obvious it was an egg and like it was magical.

R: How did you know it was magical?

T: Because of the light

P: The colours.

T: The shape.

T: [Picks up the prompt for a closer look.] Ohhh wow. I can see like markings.

E: Yeah you can see a whole lot of green stuff and you can see when its opening you can see…

T: A monster.

Focus Interview 7 December 2010, lines 114–118, 132

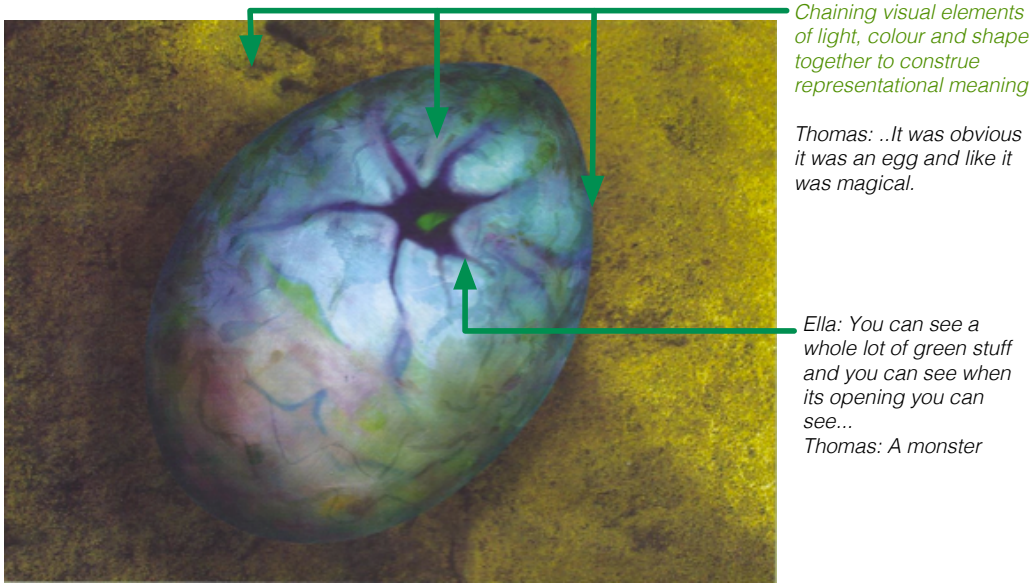


FIGURE 6.5: Linking visual elements in the 2007 BST prompt

Student participants chained visual elements during the process of transformation consistently across the prompts independent of the degree of difficulty they experienced. That is the same process of translation occurred when the students talked about aspects of the prompt 'Found' as were talked about in relation to 'The Egg.' Their reading of image began by acknowledging something familiar, then engaging with various visual elements within the picture. They then linked these attributes with other visual aspects. For example, in the case of the dog in 'Found' Pamela engaged with attributes dealing with perspective, shape and line to infer representational meaning; that the white area in the picture was a "T–shirt or coat and that a person, possibly a veterinarian", wearing the white coat was holding the dog.

Chaining of visual elements was not limited to specific visual categories and elements. With the backdrop of the purpose for reading the image, aspects appeared to be selected to construe an event driven narrative. As the following transcript shows, Thomas chained visual aspects from a number of pictures in the prompt 'Found' to create a narrative plan that included a story orientation, complication and resolution:

> A girl is being locked up and a boy and his dog are trying to find her. They have a key. They find her and they put the key in the lock but it doesn't open. They try everything metal to see if it would open. They finally realise that it was the girl's bracelet.
> Thomas' Planning Page, Focus Interview 7 December 2010

Similarly, Pamela chained ideas together from a number of separate pictures in 'Found'. She linked the teenaged–girl with the keys suggesting the girl was "trying to find the dog or something and is trying the keys to open the door" (Focus Interview December 2010).

Ella's interpretation of 'What a Mess!' (Figure 6.6) also shows evidence of chaining representational meaning across multiple pictures to construe more about what was going and who was involved in the prompt influenced by the organisational structure of narrative indicating the social purpose of viewing influences what visual aspects they look for and the order in which they continue engagement. The chaining of ideas together appears to be similar to the process of selecting visual categories to depict meaning. For instance, Ella began her response to this prompt by identifying a character for the story, pointing to the girl in the top right corner of the prompt stating, "I think the girl has." She then moved her finger to mid hot spot position on the left of the

prompt and completed her sentence “walked into her bedroom.” By combining these two pictures, Ella created a character and setting for her narrative orientation. She then returned to the picture of the teenage girl in the bottom right hand side of the prompt (as a central character), used the laptop as a circumstance of means to create a complicating stage for her composition. She explained that girl character “realised her best friend had cyber–bullied her” (Focus Interview December 2010). Ella then employed the emotional stance enacted in this picture to create a further complicating phase involving the photo of the broken piggy bank explaining that this participant had “thrown the piggy bank across the room” in response to cyber–bullying. She also connected the emotional distress portrayed by the teenager in the picture to provide an open ending for her narrative by describing that the “girl was just upset at herself” (Focus Interview December 2010). By chaining aspects of narrative depicted in each picture Ella created a story outline that included an orientation, complication and resolution with the underlying theme of a broken friendship and its demise.

FIGURE 6.6: Chaining interpretations intra–semiotically

However, this strategy did not always result in connotative meanings for all the students when they responded to difficult prompts. Rather, we have seen some of the students as illustrated by Thomas and Pamela limited to denotative meanings with their storyline remaining event driven without an underlying theme. When the students were unable to delve deeply into the meaning potentials in each picture, it appeared that they

stone skipped across the surface, picking up representational meaning along the way, without letting any idea sink to evoke deeper connotative meanings dealing with interpersonal relations rather than drawing on specific visual aspects to assist their interpretation.

Irrespective of which pictures the students connected together or how they linked visual aspects to interpret meaning, the chaining of visual aspects occurred through a series of choices. These choices were initiated by something the students found familiar which enabled them to engage with other familiar visual elements in the picture enabling chaining to occur. Because students' choice of what was most familiar or salient differed, the process of translation was initiated from different entry points and continued to build a story in a different order. This finding suggests that the process of translation undertaken by the students in selecting, engaging, framing and interpreting the visual signs for composing was dependent on what visual elements interested them and which ones they recognised. At the same time, the fewer visual elements the students recognised from the picture content, the less chaining occurred with interpretation being negatively impacted.

6.3.3. Interruptions in the process of transformation by the unknown

In the 'process of transformation' while the students started with and then built on the familiar, this could be interrupted by a number of factors. For example, if students began linking ideas but were not able to continue to link these with another visual aspects, they stopped the process and started again by identifying something else that was familiar. The prompt 'Found', discussed earlier in this chapter is a good example of the interruptions that can occur. Once the students were stuck, there was not much there to work with in the picture, further engagement and transformation of meaning was interrupted. The students then moved on to another picture that interested them and began the transformative process again. This recursive and simultaneous meaning building was more complex, with multiple interruptions causing students to re–engage with different elements in attempts to translate meaning.

Interruptions were more frequent with 'difficult prompts' where the students recognised fewer visual elements. For example, Thomas engaged in a lengthy exchange during the focus interview about the photo of the metal bracelet in the prompt 'Found'. He identified this object as a ring by linking the visual aspects of size and shape. He drew

on prior experience to assist his interpretation, which was confirmed when he said: “I’ve seen one like it.” However, the ‘ring’ was subsumed onto a grey background and without a setting or participant offered by the prompt, he remained undecided as to its purpose and so discarded the object from any further interpretation. This move required him to find another visual aspect and recommence his transformative work. Unfamiliar content such as the arthropod skeleton posed challenges for all students. As Figure 6.4 showed, because students were unable to interpret this sketch or link it to other pictures on the page, it was not taken up as part of the chain of meanings.

6.3.4. The effect of design complexity on transforming meaning

The significant change in prompt design from the BST to NAPLAN impacted on how the students viewed, connected and disconnected visual elements for construing a story. This appeared to be more evident in the NAPLAN prompts using more complex framing, size and proximity techniques such as in ‘Found’ and ‘What a Mess!’ In these prompts, pictures are held together compositionally on a coloured background. The students understood this compositional arrangement as one that required them to connect the ideas from each picture on the page to compos a narrative. They did not interpret the arrangement as one providing different story options around one theme such as ‘Found’. From this understanding, in prompts containing multiple pictures, the students combined meaning potentials across pictures to create a storyline for one narrative. For example, in the prompt ‘Found’ (Figure 6.7), Thomas connected the depiction of the teenage boy in the top left of the prompt with the object in close proximity on the page. Irrespective of the differing scale used in the pictures, Thomas inferred that the teenage boy was “trying to take a picture” of the magnifying glass. For these students, subsuming images on a common coloured background inferred compulsory relations between elements with an assumption that the representational and interactional meanings in each picture were connected in some way.

This effect was also demonstrated in Figure 6.4 where Ella chained narrative aspects intra-semiotically to create a story outline around the theme of a broken friendship. Compositional features dealing with scale (covering distance and size) and cropping also created difficulties interpreting logical relations. One example of this obstacle is highlighted in Figure 6.8. The use of scale enabled two scenes to be presented at long shot distances on the same page. In an attempt to identify the smaller indistinguishable parts in these two pictures, the students picked up the prompts for closer scrutiny attempting to garnish further possible meaning from the pictures at

closer range (Observational Notes, December 2010). Many of the circumstantial objects, character reactions and complications in the picture were unrecognisable adding complexity to the student's work of interpretation.

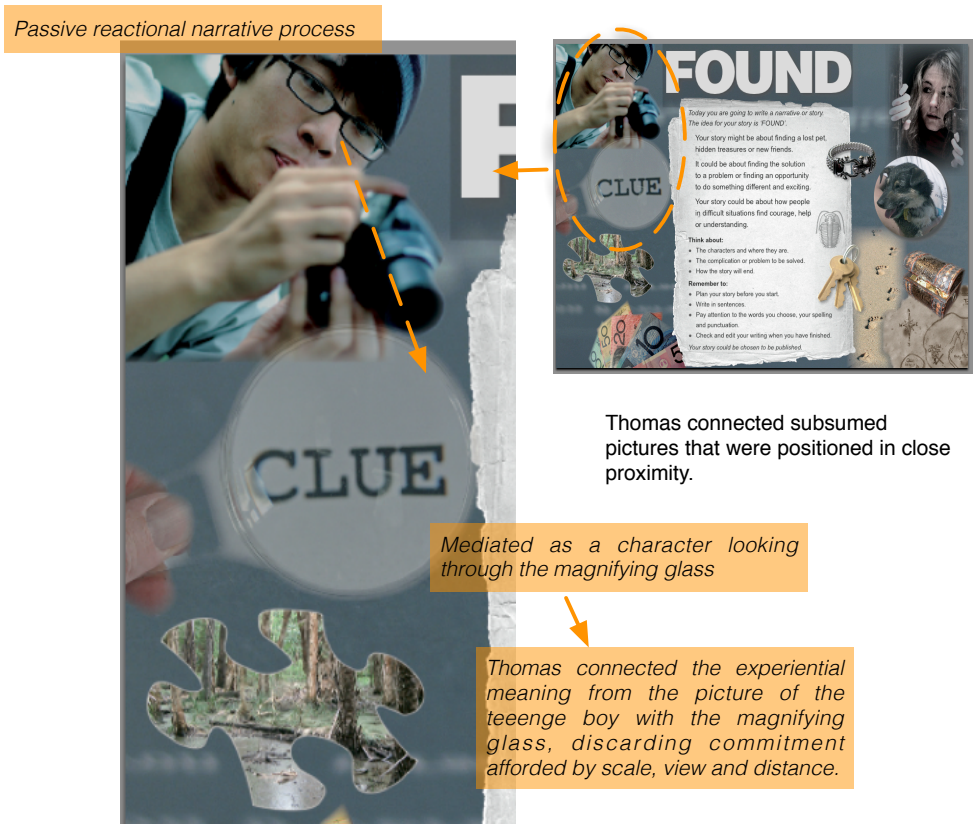


FIGURE 6.7: Intra–semiotic connections amongst pictures

Scale also increased the complexity when the objects were unfamiliar and required a closer, more careful inspection that was difficult because of the size of the picture on the page. Although pictures drew students' attention, their attempts to engage further in the representation were interrupted due to compactness of the depiction.

Ella expressed difficulty with the use of scale when she attempted to read the print on the participant's T–shirt (Figure 6.8). Initially she identified the white T–shirt in the dog picture as a "bag thing with writing on it." However, while she had judged this aspect to be important and possibly provide more information about the object she was unable to read the print due to the size, limiting her response to this picture (Focus Interview December 2010).

In contrast, the use of scale to show objects at close up distance on a subsumed background increased complexity for the students. For instance, when I talked with Pamela about 'Found' her uncertainty about the magnifying glass was increased due to

the use of size afforded to the picture. As the following excerpt shows, in an attempt to identify more information about who was represented and what was going on, she noticed “drawing”. However, the closeness of the magnifying glass made the object disproportionate in relation to other objects on the page, adding complexity to the interpretation process. As a result she inferred that the magnifying glass must have been a sign.

> Is that just a sign or something? Or is he like holding something?
>
> Like there, you can’t really see it.
>
> Focus Interview 7 December 2010, lines 473–475

FIGURE 6.8: Various compositional elements used in one prompt.

Cropping was also used in prompts comprising multiple pictures in order to fit a number of pictures in the A4 sized space provided. By cropping pictures, the circumstantial information made available for students was limited, often interrupting or limiting students’ responses. For example, as shown in Figure 6.9, the cropping of the dog picture resulted in significant dialogue during the focus interview about who was participating and what was going on as evidenced in the following excerpt.

> P: [Leans in closer to the prompt] What’s that bit there? [Pointing to the portion of the picture behind the dog]

E: I think it's a *hand.* [Leaning in closely to the picture]

P: And what about all the white part here?

T: Maybe it's in a lounge room and the dog is sitting on their lap.

P: It might be the; it might be like in a vet. Like not a vet but a…

E: A veterinary hospital.

Focus Interview 1, lines 218–226, 7 December 2010

The examples from the prompts 'What a Mess' and 'Found' illustrate that, at times, the use of scale not only lowered the resolution of pictures decreasing the clarity of the content, but also increased the complexity of interpretation, which often interrupted students' interpretive work.

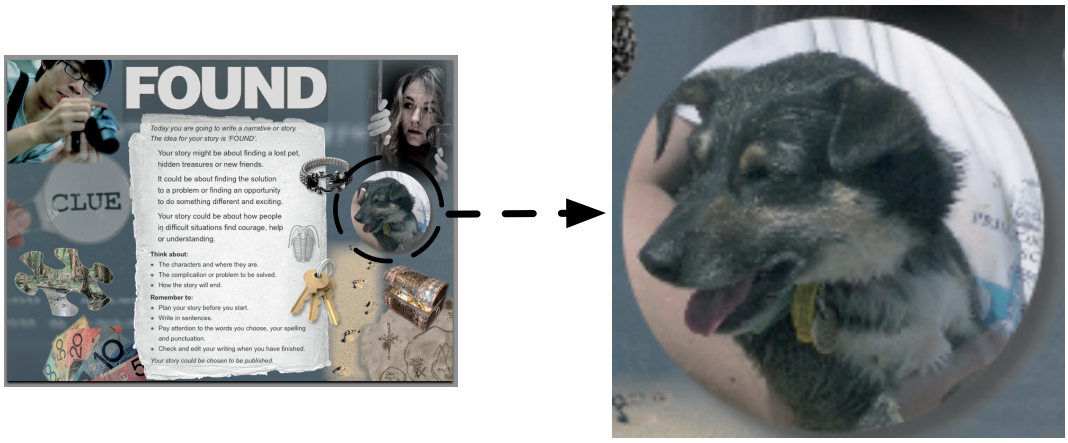


FIGURE 6.9: Use of scale in the 2008 NAPLAN prompt

Cropping also resulted in reducing the setting in which the objects were placed or showing circumstances of means in relation to the participants shown. With much of the surrounding components in the picture cropped, identifying these narrative elements from the picture was not possible requiring the students to bring more of their prior experience to interpret meaning. Nor were they able to use a wide range of visual elements to enact connections, identify places and complicating actions from one picture. Yet when the meaning realised form one picture was limited, the students seemed to connected representational meaning from each picture intra–semiotically in order to generate narrative phases for their stories. The chaining changed from linking details about visual elements to representational meaning related to the organisational structure of narratives to create event driven storylines involving various characters in actions enacted in a number of pictures.

Painter (2008) also argues that circumstantial objects in narrative pictures assist to enact connections with participants and play a role in foregrounding characters. In the instances just described, identifying representational meaning in difficult prompts rather than connecting interpersonally with the characters dominated the students' interpretations of prompts they selected as difficult. For example, when I talked with Thomas about 'Found' he found it difficult to identify visual aspects to indicate how the dog was feeling. While Pamela and Thomas talked for some time about possibilities discussing the use of lines as if "making the dog look like he was smiling" (Focus Interview December 2010), he remained confused about what was happening. As a result he discarded this picture and moved on to another image in the prompt that interested him.

6.4. Summing up

My analysis of the students transformative processes for making meaning of the picture prompt points to several complexities for the students in my study when construing meaning from prompts without guidance. Unsurprisingly, they preferred prompts that they could connect with their prior life or literary experiences. For example Thomas preferred prompts where he could write about an adventure, Pamela a fantasy and for Ella, one where she could construe a mystery story. Not only did they find more familiar prompts easier to interpret, less recognisable pictures interrupted the students' translation, often limiting the ideas generated. These interruptions were more prominent in difficult prompts irrespective of the quantity of representations or the degree of abstraction depicted.

In addition to these challenges, compositional design features like the poster style of 'What a Mess!' and 'Found' often added to the complexity of students' interpretive work. They seemed to adopt an *'all or nothing'* approach, which for prompts like 'Found' and 'What a Mess!' often forced otherwise separate experiential meanings into one narrative that were not always logical or necessary. As my analysis has shown, these types of visual writing assessment prompts are different from the types of stimuli presented during everyday writing lessons and the narratives they are reading and viewing. As Callow argues (2010, p 31), "simply having a visually saturated environment will not necessarily lead to quality learning." The same applies to the provision of visual writing assessment prompts. I argue that merely providing a

visually rich prompt will not automatically stimulate all students nor can we assume that students will naturally connect with the pictures selected for them to interpret.

Analyses of the students' responses to a number of writing assessment prompts in this study indicate that the shift towards more salient non–linguistic visual resources in writing assessment prompts is not always considerate of young viewers. The findings detailed in this section suggest that providing 'more to view' in current National Writing Assessments may add complexity to the task for some students without contributing to richer interpretations. The findings also reveal that when students struggle to make sense of meaning potentials in visual prompts more time is taken to interpret the stimulus, leaving less time to compose. Providing these students, and those like them, with knowledge about how pictures mean, and skills in applying this knowledge in different contexts, might assist them to move towards responding to unfamiliar topics and design features in snapshot narrative visual writing prompts with greater ease and result in a more focussed and richer response.

The use of one prompt with multiple narrative representations presented on the poster like design in the NAPLAN writing assessments was very different from the multimodal, multi–semiotic approach used by Thomas, Pamela and Ella's teacher during the first writing lesson. Without guidance to work through a challenging prompt, the students' responses were unfocussed and in situations where the prompt was unfamiliar there were little options or places to go for developing a rich interpretation. The following section demonstrates how students' responded to visual prompts with the support of a metalanguage to guide their transformative and transductive processes.

6.5. Responding to visual assessment prompts with a supportive metalanguage

In this section of the chapter I describe how a supportive metalanguage presented as an *educational scaffold*, developed from the conceptual matrix detailed in chapter three, was introduced to the participating students during a collaborative conversation about a visual prompt. This final stage of my data collection involved an action component where I talked with the students, revisiting a prompt they had identified as difficult during the previous focus interview drawing on the *educational scaffold*.

Martin and Rose (2102) argue that introducing a metalanguage requires students to have multiple experiences elaborating and using the language feature and its name.

Research with respect to verbal semiotics also acknowledges the challenges of mapping a metalinguistic grammar into engaging pedagogy and the different cognitive demands involving considerable levels of abstract understanding for students when learning a metalanguage (Callow 2010; Macken et al 2011; Myhill 2000). I did not have the time or opportunity to follow up with the students. It was not intended to be an entire pedagogy with significant phases of modelling, elaboration, evaluation, practice and independent application (Rose & Martin 2012). It is important to point out that my study was limited to initiating a supportive metalanguage to read the types of narrative representations presented in large-scale writing assessment prompts. Use of the educational scaffold was to analyse initial changes to the way these students engaged with a prompt that they had experienced difficulty interpreting.

During the development of the resources to use in this action phase, I also considered Mrs Millar's comments that reading pictures was not only "difficult but a whole new world for these children." Despite being avid readers of linguistic narrative and having experiences watching film, these literate and articulate students were still apprentices to critical and affective interpretation of still pictures (Teacher Email December 2010). Mrs Millar also commented that an excursion earlier in the year to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney was a first time experience for many of her students. This response speaks to how creative and imaginative responses to image may or may not be part of students' school or life experiences (Ewing 2013; 2011). With these aspects in mind, my work introducing this metalanguage with the students needed to be:

1. Introductory in nature and led by the students' responses during my conversation with them about a visual prompt.
2. Considerate of the purpose for viewing a stimulus for composing narrative.
3. Account for individual preferences organised in a non-linear way allowing students to engage with visual elements from any entry point.
4. Detailed enough to introduce a wide range of visual elements - inclusive.

6.5.1. Using a semiotically orientated metalanguage: The intervention

Thomas, Pamela, Ella and I met for a forty–minute final session to talk about the prompt 'Found' using an educational metalanguage recorded on the educational scaffold. To guide my conversation and focus my questions about this prompt, I brought the educational scaffold on a laminated A3 sized page to the session for my use, so that I could refer to the systems during the session. As Figure 6.10 shows, the educational scaffold was complex. However the intent to include a comprehensive list of visual aspects was to pick up and elaborate on what was identified by the students during the natural course of conversation rather than limit the selection. For instance, because colour was an aspect that the students were interested in and comfortable exploring, I chose this visual aspect as a suitable starting point for talking about the prompt 'Found'. I also provided each student with a two–page A4 sized sheet including general questions about narrative drawing on visual categories for the purpose of creating storylines. These questions were drawn from the educational scaffold and contextualised complex categories into general questions commonly asked with students about narratives. That is, after we had used the scaffold in our final session together, I asked the students to identify the visual components that were most helpful to them, by way of a tick. Pamela's sample of this resource is shown in Figure 6.11. This sample also shows which aspects she identified as most useful. A collation of the students' responses has also been included in Appendix C (p 302). These reflections are discussed later in this section. A collation of the students' responses has also been included in Appendix C (p 302).

Provided with the metalanguage resources, a set of visual writing assessment prompts for each student and the usual writing accompaniments for a shared planning session such as paper and pencils, we began our guided conversation. We started by referring to the *agents and objects* category on the sheet as characters and actions are essential components of narrative and this seemed an appropriate starting point. As we talked about the participants in the prompt 'Found', the position of characters in terms of point of view came up, and I directed the conversation around this visual category. Considerable conversation about preferred positions for viewing occurred. For example Thomas stated, he "preferred to look up [at the characters in the prompt 'Found'] than down." Talking about position then drew the students' attention serendipitously back to 'The Box' prompt. Their preferences for positioning in this prompt were different form 'Found' indicating position preferences were not static and

could vary in each instance. As the following excerpt show, a focussed conversation about position evoked the students' feelings of ambience about what was happening in the picture previously not mentioned in the second writing lesson. The students fashioned the aspect to interpret ideas for the type of narrative they preferred reading. Thomas used position as a way into an adventure, whereas as shown in the following excerpt, Ella used this visual aspect to work in her preference for mystery stories.

> P: Well actually looking down would be easier because if the box was open you could see what's inside.
>
> T: You could see what was in it a little bit.
>
> E: It won't be such a surprise or if something really, really, really, weird is going to be in there but if you're looking at the bottom you'd have no idea and that would be more of a mystery.
>
> Final session, 8 December 2010, lines 6972

The conversation about a visual aspect had drawn students' attention back to other visual prompts and what had initially been overlooked in 'The Box' prompt now became realised with the use of a guided metalanguage. As our conversation continued, and I guided the critical analysis of visual aspects, I picked up on opportunities to discuss visual categories relevant to the students' interests and those, which integrated into the conversation naturally. For example, to clarify confusion between the use of texture and translucency in the 'The Egg' prompt, I invited the students to feel the carpet in comparison to the smooth laminated table. I explained the degrees of transparency used in same prompt to depict the egg by comparing the opaque internal glass wall compared to the clear glass window in the room. Our conversation about varying textures encouraged the students to talk further about the differences between different surfaces in general. The students talked about the differences between other 'rough and smooth' surfaces of objects in the room. Making sense of the visual categories in the metalanguage therefore involved the students drawing on contextual life experiences and objects, gestural and tactile resources. While focussed on 'Found' the students were drawn back to 'The Egg' prompt, recalling different textures, chaining this visual aspect with line and colour. Ella became aware of "the details in it [the egg], like the little lines, the squirly lines and the colours" (Final meeting December 2010) and from this interpreted the egg as an imaginary object and event rather than a real happening.

By increasing the students' awareness of how different textures were represented, they applied this knowledge freely to other instances. For example in 'The Egg' prompt, engaging further with texture and colour in the background enabled the students to 'chain' meaning from various visual aspects to identify possible settings for the egg object. Thomas deduced that the egg "could be on sand." Pamela placed the egg "in a nest or like in a burrow" and Ella inferred that the egg was positioned on a rock (Final session December 2010). Further engagement with texture and colour enabled them to gather or 'chain' meaning from various visual aspects to identify possible settings for the egg object. For example, Thomas deduced that the egg "could be on sand." Pamela placed the egg "in a nest or like in a burrow" and Ella inferred that the egg was positioned on a rock (Final session December 2010).

I then encouraged the students to apply this general understanding about texture and translucency to further engage with these elements in the background and foreground of other prompts to see how the students could apply a general knowledge about a visual aspect to other prompts. While this activity acted to clarify these visual attributes it became evident that the students needed further elaboration than this introductory session could offer. In acknowledging this limitation, I also recognised a significant change in the students' responses. That is, during their first read of the pictures, the students' attention was focussed on the foreground and the main objects such as the egg and the red box. By increasing the students' awareness of how different textures were represented, they applied this knowledge freely to 'The Egg' prompt, engaging further with the background.

What initially had been a session to increase students' engagement with difficult prompts had also resulted in deeper interpretation of prompts the students had identified as "easy" such as 'The Egg' prompt. This response was unexpected but welcomed. The students naturally practised the use of new metalanguage to interpret aspects of other prompts, drawing parallels and new meaning not previously identified. This response indicated that the use of a metalanguage enabled the students to tap further in their prior experiences in order to realise additional meaning. In terms of engaging further with a difficult prompt 'Found' the metalanguage provided a means for the students to *'play around'* with the supportive language as they negotiated potential meanings together.

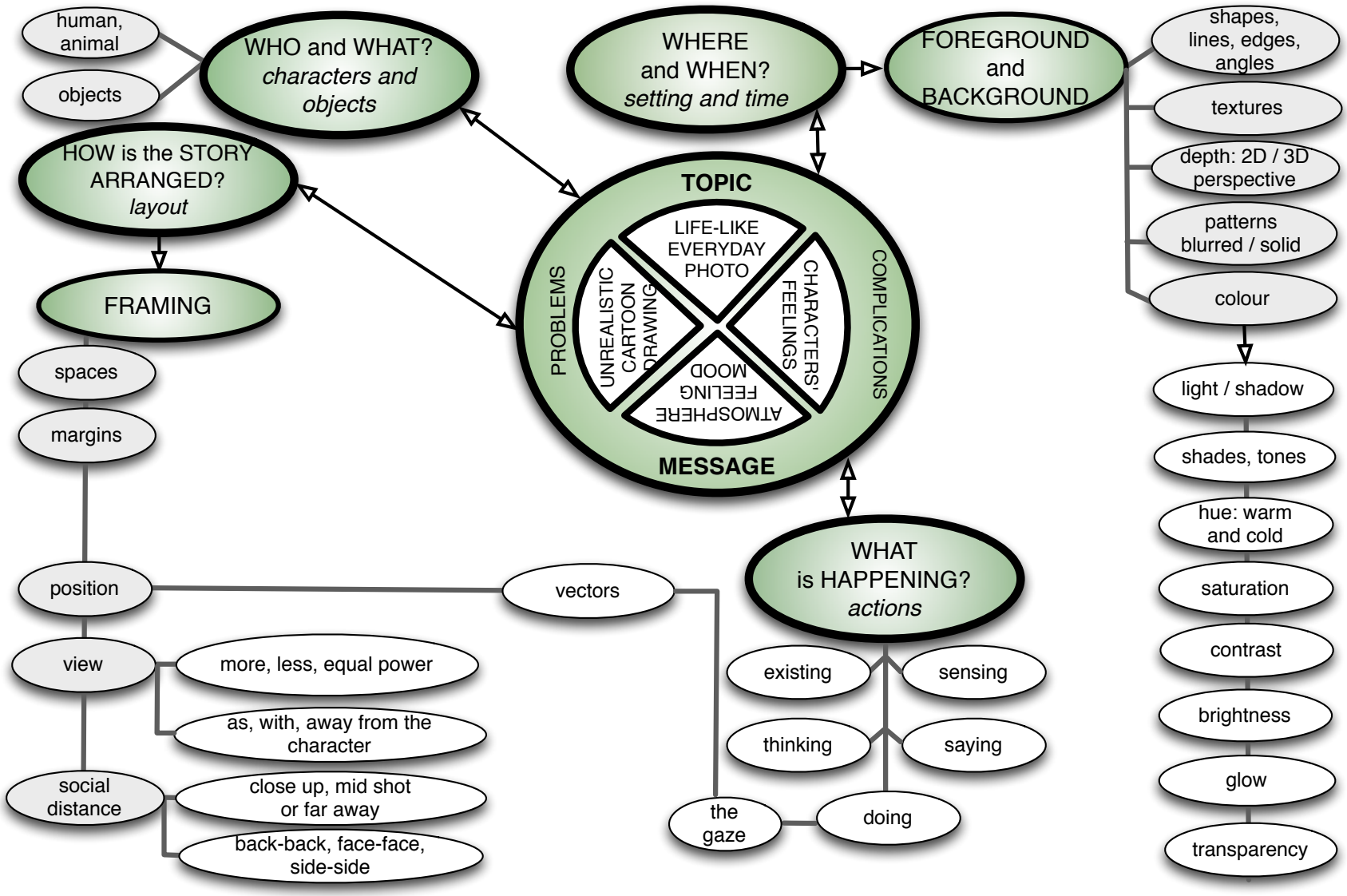


FIGURE 6.10: The educational scaffold used as a resource for the researcher

Agents and Objects
Who /What
When

Who / what is in the picture?
Who / what is 'doing something' in the picture?
What do you look for when you view the picture?
What stands out and why do you think this?
How does your eye travel over the page as you look?
How are you interacting with the agents?

Actions
Doing
Thinking
Sensing
Existing
Saying

What is happening?
What is getting done?
Are things happening or is there a sense of happening?

How are the objects connecting or relating to each other?
Do you feel close to the actions that are happening?

Real / Ideal
Detail
Realness
Make believe
Feelings
Beliefs
Mood

How real does the picture seem?
What is there that makes you think that way?
(Are they photos, drawings, computer graphic pictures?)
What is their sense of realness?
Is the picture detailed?
(Are the lines clear, lightly sketched, out of focus?)
Are the objects 3D?
(Are the pictures flat, do they have perspective, overlap?)

Katherine Bates 2010 Educational Metalanguage

Pamela.V Pink

Framing and Layout
Position
Distance
Spaces
Angle
Placement /View

How are you positioned with the picture?
(Close up, far away, mid range, side view)

At what angle is the picture presented to you?
What is your view?
(Above, below, next to, on top of?)
How are the text and pictures positioned on the page?

What spaces can you describe on the page?
What do the spaces tell you about what is happening?

142-145
182-184

Background
Shapes
Textures
Patterns
Colours
Depth

What shapes can you see?

What textures and patterns can you see?

What colours can you see?

What do the colours tell you about the mood of the background?

Foreground
Shapes
Textures
Patterns
Colours
Depth

Are there contrasts and harmonies with the background?

What interaction is there between the foreground and the background?

How is it different / similar from the background?

Colour
Brightness
Luminous
Hue- warm and cold
Shades
Range of colour
Contrasts
Saturation
Feelings
Solid / transparent

What mood does the colour give?

How does the colour influence the action of what might be happening?

How does the colour make you feel?

What does the colour tell you about the agents and the objects in the picture?

Katherine Bates 2010 Educational Metalanguage

FIGURE 6.11.Questions developed by recontextualising the educational scaffold

My analysis of their conversation identified similarities across the students in regards to how feelings, values and mood were evoked in the pictures. That is, the interactional realisations in an image. The use of the metalanguage assisted the students to engage more deeply with the interpersonal function of the picture component. The students used a wider range of finer visual elements within the category of colour to realise interpersonal and experiential meaning potential. For instance, Thomas agreed with Pamela's comment that, "thinking about the feelings from the colour helped" (Focus Interview, December 2010). While Ella said she wasn't "sure how to explain it", she acknowledged that aspects of colour listed on the scaffold had helped her evoke a "mysterious feeling to it. Like something wasn't quite right". Thomas stated that the prompt 'Found' gave him "a kind of creepy feeling" (Final meeting, December 2010).

Additional colour elements provided in the *educational scaffold* assisted the students when they talked about characters' motivation and stance in the prompt 'Found'. For example, by employing finer elements of colour including shadow and brightness, Pamela initiated a conversation about how colours represent character motives. This began a series of turns, where the students articulated generalisations about colour aspects to evoke characters' inner qualities and thus develop characterisation.

> T: Yeah but not all superheroes like in stories like goodies and badies, they're not all wearing black. Some are wearing bright colours but they're not always good.
> R: So colour is one part one of the picture we can think about to help us understand the message of the picture.
> T: Yeah but with bright colours, if you put some shade over it, it looks kind of evil. It would make you feel like something was going to happen. Like you feel scared.
> P: It could be either. It could be good or it could be bad. Yeah but not all colours make you think that. Like dark colours are not always bad. Like Batman is black and he is good.
> Focus Interview December 2010, lines 142–145, 182–185

The students' general understandings about hue, shadow and brightness were then employed in response to further provoke representational and interactional meaning in the 'Found' prompt. For instance, when Pamela talked about the use of shadow, she

said she felt a “bit creeped out” by ‘The Found’ prompt. She also verbalised how colours enacted characters’ feelings as illustrated in the following quote:

> Because the colour is like really bright it would be like she is really happy but because colours always make a difference, to me, if it was really dark it’s like something has happened and she is upset.
>
> Final meeting, 7 December 2010, lines 616–617

In regard to setting, deeper engagement with aspects of tone evoked the students’ feelings about the ambience depicted in pictures. Similar to the example above, the students began talking about tone in general terms. For example, when I asked Ella how she would feel if a picture used “all red tones”, she replied that she would “be freaked out” thus showing an emotional response to the affordance of tone in a picture. Pamela also expressed an emotional response to the use of blue tones in pictures. She explained that if a picture was dominated by blue she would “feel kind of happy; cool like nice” (Final meeting December 2010). However, differing use of hue evoked a different emotional response from Thomas. He expressed his feelings about the happenings in the ‘Found’ prompt by enacting shaking and wrapping his arms around his upper body explaining that the picture looked “really cold.” His physical re-enactment was accompanied by an emotional response with him stating, “and I would feel frightened.” These generalisations about the varying feelings evoked by the use of hue were then applied when they brought up other prompts. While their interpersonal feelings about the narrative were increased, their feelings varied. One instance was with ‘The Egg’ prompt when Pamela explained, “well all the colours are bright and happy and Ella is saying that, like, that it’s like more scarier with dark colours” (Final meeting December 2010). Another example was evident when Thomas commented that the grey hue in the background of the prompt ‘Found’ made him feel “all gloomy.” Painter (2012) states that climatic aspects in settings can be reinforced by the use of colour choices evoking psychological states in viewers. In my study, when I talked with the students about the use of finer colour aspects dealing with hue and tone, they responded emotionally to the ambience evoked by the use of warm and cool colours in prompts.

The process of engaging with tones, hue, shadow and brightness shifted the students toward a deeper response to the interactional function of visual writing prompts. For

example, Thomas commented that the scaffold assisted with “sensing, [engaging with] the detail, feelings and beliefs” represented. He reiterated that the ‘action’ categories drew his attention to “sensing what he was feeling” when he was trying to make sense of how the characters were feeling and what they were responding to (Final meeting December 2010). In reference to the actions listed on the students’ scaffold page, Pamela also commented that these categories facilitated her interpretation dealing with tension and impending disruptions:

> I think doing and sensing because something is starting there [pointing to the girl in ‘Found’] but there is a sense something more might be going to happen. It’s the same in ‘The Red Box’. It’s a sensing thing.
> Final meeting, 7 December 2010, line 209

Also notable was the students’ increase in attention to the non–transactional reactional processes in the pictures. For example when talking about what the characters might be looking at and responding to, Thomas commented on a character in ‘Found’ that was previously unmentioned saying, “yeah, now she might be trapped and looking for someone and like saying help me help me” (Final session, lines 506, 511 2010).

These findings are reiterated on Pamela’s support page as shown in Figure 6.10 where she circled ‘Actions’ title, ticked the ‘sensing, feelings and beliefs’ categories. By drawing on elements dealing with actions and processes, greater colour choices appeared to contribute to:

- The students’ awareness of character’s feelings
- Feelings about the ambience enacted in settings, and
- Evoking a more conscious awareness of the how impending actions and problems made them ‘feel’.

These three aspects of interpreting image are important to consider because it is acknowledged that talking about how a picture positions a viewer to feel is one of the most challenging aspects of image (Callow 2008). Closely aligned with how viewers connect with characters and their feelings in a picture is the use of eye contact or otherwise termed ‘the gaze’ (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006). As I pointed out in the analyses of this visual aspect in chapter four, varying degrees of eye contact were deployed across the prompts, with only one prompt depicting a direct gaze. While only introductory, the conversation I had with the students about this visual aspect evoked

deeper responses about the interactions and relations in the pictures. The following quote illustrates how a conversation about eye contact with characters in the prompt 'Found' influenced their responses. For example, during this conversation about eye contact the students elicited stronger connections with the characters represented by expressing degrees of emotion ranging from "scared" to "freaked out". These emotional responses and closer attention to affect, evoked students' feelings of tension about impending complicating actions involving the character represented.

> R: …see how she is looking across? What if she was looking straight at you?
>
> T: I'd be scared.
>
> R: Less, more or the same as when she looks across at you?
>
> E: More.
>
> R: Why?
>
> P: 'Cause it's freaky like if she was looking over there then turns and looks at you… Well you might think she is going to do something to you…
>
> E: That kind of stare I call a death stare and I'd freak out because she's looking somewhere else and then she is looking at you with that facial expression. So it's like I've done something wrong and something is going to happen.
>
> Final meeting 7 December 2010, lines 585–593, 596, 599–600

Once I had introduced the visual element dealing with degrees of eye contact using a number of examples with my own eyes, Thomas' attention was drawn to the use of this attribute in other instances. For example, when we were talking about the use of colour contrast, he connected colour elements with eye contact commenting, "Ohhh, like inside the egg is like dark and there is this little bright green dot. Like that could be an eye. It could be an eye looking at you - freaky" (Final meeting December 2010). The conversation about colour had increased Thomas' awareness of a non–transactional process occurring in the picture that had previously been omitted in their responses to this prompt.

My analyses of the students' unguided response to a difficult prompt identified that the more complex compositional design in the NAPLAN writing prompts impacted how they connected visual aspects and realised logical relations between different narrative representations. However, my conversation with them about textual elements was not

elaborated as much as I had anticipated because they preferred talking about visual attributes dealing with the interactional function of the pictures. Not unexpectedly, this response indicated that more exploration about the textual functions of pictures was needed than the time allowed in one forty-minute session. In a general sense, the implications of various framing devices deployed in the NAPLAN prompt design on the way narrative representations are arranged on a page need to be considered and brought to students' attention. In this way, they may be more conscious of the homogeneity and distinctions between multiple pictures represented in various contexts and would also be useful for reading narratives in NAPLAN writing assessments using this design.

During the reflection phase the students identified which categories had interested them by recording ticks on their copy of the scaffold provided to them (Figure 6.11). I then collated their choices in a table (Appendix I, p 302) and compared them identifying that not all categories were equally as useful amongst the students, used in the same frequency or as useful in each instance. For example, textures, patterns and depth in the foreground were not used at all whereas they were identified as helpful when interpreting the background of visual prompts. These results from a single initial intervention with four students supports literature that argues for the benefits of a systematic analysis of pictures when drawing out meaning potentials and developing critical reader response (Ewing 2013; 2011; Callow 2013; Rosenblatt 1983). More research into how students use an educational metalanguage when interpreting different single narrative images needs to be undertaken in order to understand more about how students generalise visual categories for use in various instances.

6.6. The shift from an unguided to a guided translation

In this chapter I have endeavoured to demonstrate what happens for students when visual prompts from large-scale writing assessments are provided to students without guidance. A major purpose of this study was to investigate how students respond to prompts without support and then consider the effects of a semiotically orientated metalanguage on students' interpretation of visual writing prompts.

The students in this study, as young readers of image, have many opportunities ahead of them to learn about pictures and how they mean. However, as the analysis has

shown, at this stage of their learning experiences as young writers and readers of image, they are currently provided with visual stimulus for composing narrative in large–scale standardised writing assessments from early primary school grades. Investigating how these students respond to these types of prompts identified a number of complexities. These included the difficulties experienced when visual prompt content was unfamiliar including multiple interruptions in the process of translation and the generation of ideas. The students also struggled with multiple representations in the one prompt, requiring extra time to make sense of the possible meanings, often attributing logical relations where not necessarily warranted.

What the data has also showed the complexity of the process of transformation. When reading an image and undertaking the transformative work required from initial interest in visual elements, through engagement, framing and realisation of meaning. In addition to the process of transformation, the purpose of viewing is also a backdrop directing what the students look for. Therefore, at the same time students are working to chaining visual elements together in simultaneous fashion, so too are they chaining together a narrative because it is events focussed, and such how they interpret and frame their interpretations of the image is influenced by the purpose of composing a story.

The students welcomed the opportunity to work with an educational scaffold for unpacking possible meanings. Our conversation using the supportive metalanguage from the scaffold was extensive and highly interactive leaving no time for composing. What came from this initial intervention was a richer and more engaged interpretation offering deeper interpersonal connection with the characters and events represented.

Also significant was the positive shift in students' responses from an unguided to a guided analysis of visual prompts due to the effect of an introductory experience with a supportive metalanguage. In considering where the students were at, a semiotically orientated metalanguage provided the means for them to access more from visual narratives, particularly interactional relations. They were able to select all attributes from the educational scaffold, their selections were based on what they were ready for and for the prompt they were interpreting. For instance the students were ready to explore colour more deeply, leaving textual functions for another time. A high engagement in the task also suggests that students are often able to work with quite

complex frameworks and scaffolds but they need guidance, with recursive, developmental and contextual experiences.

From my analysis of prompts used in large-scale writing assessments and four students' translation of them, I argue that the picture aspect in the prompts is a factor shaping student outcomes. For when the students in this study were challenged by the image in a writing prompt, they found the process of translation more difficult. In these instances, their interpretations were more denotative rather than symbolic thus impacting negatively on the depth and quantity of story aspects they generated. Considering the initial positive results from the single intervention phase in this study, I predict that further cumulative work about how to interpret a single narrative image for composing, would benefit from using a supportive metalanguage.

Chapter seven

Image in teaching and assessing: Metalanguage as mediator

Non-linguistic visual representation is a powerful semiotic for the communication of meaning. It is acknowledged as such and widely used in teaching, learning and assessment cycles (ACARA 2014; Callow 2013; Chan & O'Donnell 2008; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Macken-Horarik 2009; Walsh 2010). The use of non-linguistic image has not only been consistently used in large–scale writing assessment prompts but is growing as the salient communicator of narrative representation in these texts. The problem is not the use or the growing salience of this visual semiotic, rather the problem is the presumption that the depiction of meaning potentials through this semiotic is both naturally accessible and value neutral in terms of student assessment outcomes. While research into the effect of pictures in reading assessments suggests that pictures can add a layer of complexity (Daly & Unsworth 2011; Peterson et al 2007; Unsworth, Thomas & Bush 2004), the role of image as a stimulus in writing assessments has been largely overlooked. My study addressed this gap by examining the impact visual writing prompts had on four students' production of meaning from these visual writing assessment prompts as stimuli for composing.

My inquiry into the role of the picture aspect in writing assessment prompts therefore builds on the body of knowledge about the use of images in standardised reading comprehension assessments (Chan & O'Donnell 2009; Chan & Unsworth 2009; Daly & Unsworth 20011; Masters 2014; Unsworth, Thomas & Bush 2004). It also adds knowledge about the potential a metalanguage has for supporting a critical analysis of visual semiotics.

The findings from my study indicate that state and national assessments in Australia consistently include pictures in the writing component. With this continuous use of image as a stimulus, it seems clear that the task writers expect image to hold many possible meanings and influences. Yet, my findings indicate that the reading of the image aspect in prompts and the subsequent translation process was not simple. Similar to Chan and Unsworth (2009), findings from my study highlight the additional complexities that a picture stimulus can bring to a writing assessment task for some

students. These findings bring the cultural neutrality and natural availability of meaning potentials from a visual stimulus shared by all participants into question.

My investigation into *how visual prompts shape students' written responses* was answered by addressing the following sub-questions:

- *What resources do students draw on to assist their interpretations of visual resources provided in writing assessment prompts?*
- *How do students talk about visual writing prompts?*
- *What do students use from these prompts for their compositions?*
- *What does a metalanguage for working with non–linguistic visual resources look like?*
- *How does a metalanguage assist students to talk about and build ideas for composing a narrative using picture prompts?*

A detailed analysis of the writing assessment prompts from a ten-year period was undertaken using an *analytical framework* underpinned by social semiotic theory. Significant historical shifts were identified in the way the visual prompts were designed, the amount of story aspects provided and a move away from literary type stimuli used in the BST with the introduction of the NAPLAN in 2008. These changes set up new conditions for reading the prompts. Utilising the analytical framework also revealed the transforming of meaning from visual writing prompts is multilayered and complex.

An analysis of four students' responses to visual assessment prompts identified capacities to access meaning is likely to vary considerably from one student to another in varying degrees and in each instance. These variances depend on the students' life experiences, cultural knowledge, topics, literary preferences, skills in transforming meaning and their understanding of the genre they are viewing (Arnheim 1969; Barthes 1977; Chandler 2007; Lister & Wells 2001; Thibault 1991). When presented with a range of visual writing assessment prompts, not surprisingly the students in my study had particular preferences. They generally preferred BST assessment prompts to NAPLAN and some NAPLAN prompts over others. These preferences were dependent on how familiar the content in the prompts was to them, the assessment context for writing and task time requirements. Not surprisingly, the less preferred prompts and those identified by them as more difficult to interpret generated less quality and quantity writing. These findings indicate that the writing stimulus was a

contributing factor to the ideas generated and the storylines four students construed for their subsequent writing task.

Observations of three participating students' writing lessons revealed that the stimulus provided in national writing assessment differs from the immersion in semiotically rich stimuli provided in their classrooms. In the lesson I observed, multiple multimodal resources were provided as stimulus and the teacher tried very hard to mediate the interpretation of these resources. The resultant compositions from this lesson showed that the students did reasonably well in transforming meaning. The teacher had provided lots of 'pickings', enabling students to gather aspects across the stimuli. However, without the rich selection of resources and no mediation of meaning potentials in current large–scale writing assessments, skills in reading the single monomodal multi–semiotic visual stimulus provided in these assessments is crucial.

While it is reasonable to expect that not all possible meanings made available in a stimulus is, or will to be read by young novice learners, the action component of my study revealed there was a significant positive effect of a semiotically orientated metalanguage on the students' reading of past BST and NAPLAN visual assessment prompts, resulting in a more thorough and conscious appraisal and deeper connotative interpretation of the visual prompts. So, with the growing use of visual in both in and out of school practices (Callow 2013; Gee 2007; Zammit 2010), learning about how pictures can mean and developing skills in apply this knowledge in various contexts is beneficial; making best use of writing assessment prompts that involve a visual prompt is one context.

7.1. Changing assessment prompt designs from BST to NAPLAN

With the introduction of the NAPLAN in 2008, a significant historical change in terms of the compositional function of the visual writing assessment prompts requiring a different type of browsing and more complex intra-textual work for utilising meaning potentials. The less prescriptive design is now used for both primary and secondary students participating in the assessment. These changes were not unanimously preferred or as easily used by the participating primary school students, with an additional layer of complexity for novice readers of this resource identified.

In addition, the prompt analysis identified a historical shift from BST to NAPLAN in the function of the words in the text. Firstly, the predominantly provisional function of words in BST which elaborate on story tropes, move to in instructional mainly providing

instructions about the task, organisational structure of a narrative, punctuation requirements or themes for the narrative. By removing possible storylines from the words, the picture becomes the predominant storyteller and source for prospective narrative ideas thus increasing the role of this non-linguistic visual aspect as a stimulus.

Secondly the students' approach to the task changed when multiple pictures showing numerous storylines were used in order to make sense of what was on offer. Analysis of the classroom observations and interviews with the students repeatedly demonstrated that the NAPLAN writing assessment prompts using this design feature were more complex, requiring higher level of interpretive skills and more time to puzzle out meaning potentials. When the participating students responded to these types of NAPLAN prompts, limited understanding of framing and positioning left them making illogical connections amongst pictures on the page. I would argue that these types of prompts might therefore be more complicated than the earlier BST prompts for novice viewers. To make best use of these resources skills in transforming meaning within each picture and making a number of choices across pictures were beneficial.

Part of the added complexity for these students was also the historical change to the narrative writing task. Unlike earlier BST narrative writing assessments where younger students were provided with part of a linguistic story and then required to compose only part of a narrative, all participants in the NAPLAN narrative writing task are required to compose a four–staged narrative including an orientation, complication, resolution and optional coda within the same allocated time as the earlier BST prompts. This is expressed in the NAPLAN narrative writing prompt instructions that ask students to think about characters and setting, a complication or problem to be solved, and a story ending (ACARA 2008; 2009; 2010). The marking criterion rewards compositions including these structural narrative components, by scoring papers containing these elements higher (MCEETYA 2010). In combination with less storyline offered by the linguistic aspect of the prompt, students are required to gather more information from the pictures and, in a transductive move change these visual meanings to compose a complete story.

The Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA) makes broad reference to the developmental cline in composing narrative, acknowledging that more mature writers reflect a strong understanding that "the middle of a story needs to involve a problem or complication that introduces conflict, danger or tension that must be

resolved" (ACARA 2014). However, current narrative writing assessment prompts offer the same task instructions to all participating students from years three to nine, asking novice writers to compose this type of story.

The teachers of the participating students responded to this requirement by providing students in early primary with a four-staged scaffold for story planning during their daily writing lessons. This practice indicates the back play effect that NAPLAN has on classroom teaching practice. The 'sculpting' of teaching to assessment regimes is one that is often seeded in an ethical response by teachers over concerns for their students (Elwood 2012; Kostogriz & Doeke 2013). However while this 'teach to the test' approach is acknowledged, it is one that has been argued to have negative effects on teaching practice, narrow the curriculum and students' exploration of composing this type of text (Abrams 2003; Higgins 2006; Power 1997; Shelton & Fu 2004).

Three of the four students in my study preferred earlier BST prompts that provided a written story orientation. These students commented that the writing prompts in NAPLAN "don't start off with a story to help" (Focus Interview, December 2010). In contrast, one student's preference was highly dependent on the topic depicted requiring less from the words when the pictures were understood. My findings demonstrated that four students engaged differently with the prompts provided, preferring some visual stimuli to others impacting their compositions. When the picture aspect challenged them, more words were required on the page to work in complementarity with what the potential offerings from the image.

These four students demonstrated that the changes in design from the BST to those used in NAPLAN writing prompts were not always advantageous to them. On a larger scale, it is likely to expect that a *'one size fits all'* narrative writing task targeting "the full range of student capabilities expected of students from Years Three to Nine" (MCEETYA 2010) would be unable to take into account the different individual interests, backgrounds and preferences for viewing and composing. These findings bring the assumed cultural neutrality and natural availability of meaning potentials from a visual stimulus for all participants into question.

7.2. Contrast between classroom practice and assessment regimes

Analyses of the students' classroom writing lessons identified differences between their learning experiences and the assessment experience in the NAPLAN. Their writing

lesson was semiotically abundant. However the teacher-mediated interpretation was absent when working out meaning potentials from the NAPLAN visual prompts. These findings suggest a contrast between how visual is used in classroom writing practices and in current writing assessment regimes.

In a sense, the NAPLAN practice is a distortion of classroom practice. Students are presented with a prompt to construe meaning without the collaborative field building around the topic that occurs in classrooms. In addition, translating meaning from this resource is the first and critical step before composing a narrative using generated ideas. The students in this study were often challenged by these requirements, with time limitations adding additional pressure to the construal of meaning.

In further contrast to classroom practice where students are provided opportunities to compose on topics of choice, the NAPLAN assessment provides a pre-assigned topic presented visually. Contrary to statements by the governing body that NAPLAN is "not a test of content" (ACARA 2014) my study demonstrated that topic preference played a significant role in the students' ease of composing and the quality of their eventuating story. I would argue that the content provided in the form of a visual prompt to students does impact their ideas generated and subsequent writing. These students commented that some prompts were easier than others, preferring those they could "relate to [because] it was something we knew or have" (Interview December 2010). When the context in which the NAPLAN is administered, that is devoid of topic freedom, collaborative conversation, considerable time to think, plan and rewrite, it was not unexpected that the students repeatedly asked me "how much time they had left." The extended recursive writing approach seemed to be replaced by a 'speed writing' routine with erasers busily ridding pages of surface errors as the students tried to construct a published story that was ideationally and interpersonally rich, free of textual error in their first draft within a forty-minute replicated time limit provided by NAPLAN.

The NAPLAN task had a 'playback' effect on pedagogy. As demonstrated by two teachers preparing their students for NAPLAN in writing lessons with a pre-assigned topic, limited explicit modelling or teaching on how to undertake the process of selection and framing from pictures to construe meaning from the stimuli provided. However, in addition to providing a pre assigned topic, the writing practice I observed involved presenting students with various multimodal multi semiotic stimuli including an oral retelling, tactile objects, picture books with continued story illustrations and a film rather than using one monomodal non–linguistic visual presented in NAPLAN writing

prompts. The contrast between classroom and assessment stimulus makes the single monomodal visual writing stimulus provided in NAPLAN 'mean more'. As the sole stimulant, more needs to be drawn from the one resource and skills for interpreting this semiotic become critical in order to construe meaning for composing.

Common to both classroom and assessment regimes was the multi-layered transductive task requiring participants to change generated ideas from a picture stimulus into words. This transductive hub of moving from pictures to words was an unfocussed aspect of the writing lesson and one seemingly not factored as a player in students' writing outcomes in national assessments.

7.3. Complexity of the process of translation

Working from a non-linguistic visual stimulus to compose a linguistic narrative involves a number of complex transformative and transductive moves in order to translate meaning. Kress (2010) argues this process is rather linear where viewers get 'kick started' from what interests them, which leads them through various stages ending in the recontextualisation of original elements translated as new meaning. My findings suggest that this process is not homogenous, but that there are different aspects, suggesting the process involves various complex moves and deviations, taking students on different tangents as they work through meaning possibilities. I would also argue that this process is more recursive turning back in on itself moving towards realisation; picking up, discarding and re-evaluating visual aspects which do not always lead to the production of a new sign. This process involves knowledge about the way pictures make meaning, how to identify these potentials and use them to construe new meaning. My study has demonstrated that limited viewers' knowledge about visual aspects narrowed the possibilities for interpreting meaning. Moreover, the more unfamiliar a visual prompt, the more interruptions and 'dead-ends' the students experienced during the transformative process. Several examples were identified in these students' responses such as their conversations about the arthropod fossil and the magnifying glass in the prompt 'Found,' which ended up in these visual meaning potentials being abandoned despite their initial interest in these pictures.

One of the challenges for the students in my study when working from visual prompts as stimuli was the complexity of the translation process. While, the process ensued more smoothly and linearly in less challenging prompts, the opposite was the case when the narratives depicted were more abstract from their life experiences. Without the tools to identify and engage with unfamiliar visual representations in the prompt, the

process of translation was interrupted, often failing to complete. These findings suggest that a visual writing assessment prompt does not always deliver its intended purpose and can, at times, render students with little to work with for their compositions. Findings from this study contribute to research arguing that access to meaning via image is not always immediate or easy. Students often experience difficulties with the interpretive process, resulting in limited access to ideas, experiences and feelings (Callow 2010; Miroeff 1999; Ewing 2013).

For the students in my study, being stranded in the familiar limited their use of more abstract pictures to generate ideas for composing. The types of familiarity also varied for these students ranging from familiarity with the topic, the characters, the visual elements used and the type of narrative genre more likely to be evoked such as a mystery or adventure story. In the broader context regards the topic, the NAPLAN writing prompts are likely to disadvantage novice readers of visual working with less familiar visual content. I would argue that while highly unlikely that one visual prompt used in a large–scale writing assessment can evoke a response from diverse learners across Australia, the process of transforming ideas from a non-linguistic visual resource would benefit from the application of a semiotically orientated metalanguage. Another step towards translation involves a transductive move, changing generated ideas from non-linguistic semiotic into linguistic form. I argue that the complexity of translation can place literacy demands on students in addition to the skills of composing a narrative. These findings

7.4. Positive effect of a semiotically orientated metalanguage

The introductory use of a metalanguage had a positive change on the four students' access to and interpretation of meaning potentials in visual prompts. For these students a supportive language used to unpack meaning potentials in pictures enhanced their translation process, moving them from interest in a visual aspect to engage with the image to select and frame meaning, and to persist with this. What my study suggests is that students are able to work with sometimes quite complex frameworks to both open up and widen their access to what is available in pictures. Moreover these students welcomed the opportunity to use the educational scaffold and supportive questions resulting in higher engagement and expressed relief when what was once obscure became clear. Exclamations from them when applying the metalanguage such as "Wow now I see" (Interview December 2010) and requests to

take the 'sheet' back to their classroom to use, indicate the support a metalanguage had for these students when making sense of the non-linguistic visual semiotic.

The provision and exploration of the visual prompts using a supportive metalanguage also assisted to take these students from the quotinium to the abstract and the metaphoric. For instance, what was first identified by the students in 'The Egg' prompt as a "cracking egg" became a "freaky event" where the green speck previously not mentioned in a first read, now depicted the eye of a monster that was peering out at them (Final session December 2010). As the students' evaluation of the effectiveness of a supportive metalanguage indicated, the metalanguage acted as mediator of meaning assisting them to engage interpersonally with the images, recognising the "detail, sensing the feelings and beliefs" of the characters depicted (Final session December 2010). Findings from this study contribute to a body of research arguing that engaging with visual texts is improved with the necessary literacy skills to view and interpret meaning potentials (Callow 2010; 2005; Coombes 2009; Exley & Cottrell 2012; Falk-Ross & Linder 2009; Farrell; Arizpe & McAdam 2010). This study also complements other research into standardised assessments that found image can add to item complexity when used as stimulus to assess oral or written linguistic skills (Daly & O'Donnell 2008; Daly & Unsworth 2011; Higgins et al. 2006; Gazella & Stockman 2003; Pratt & Mackenzie-Keating 1985; Unsworth & Chan 2009). However, these studies have not focussed on the role of image as stimulus for composing narrative. Thus my research extends new knowledge to the area of the use of image in literacy assessments.

Also noteworthy, while a story was not constructed post intervention due to time limitations, one student's evaluation acknowledged that the matrix could assist in "helping to give ideas about sentences, a title and thinking about feelings" (Final session December 2010). These findings do not dispute the potential effective use of a non-linguistic visual semiotic as a stimulus in writing assessments. On the contrary, results from my study indicate that this semiotic was more engaging and interpretations more productive when these students were provided with a framework for learning about and learning to read the non–linguistic visual semiotic.

7.5. Pedagogical implications

The incorporation of visual texts in teaching and learning is foregrounded in recent Australian Curriculum reform with texts defined as being "written, spoken, visual or

multimodal" (ACARA 2014). Most relevant in this document and in line with the turn to the visual (Callow 2013; Kress 2010), is the inclusion of visual knowledge as one of the four organising elements in the curriculum areas. The pedagogical approach underlying the Australian Curriculum is therefore one that engages students with texts in multiple modes, building cumulative knowledge around expressing and developing ideas expressed in the visual. This view supports current research on the need for innovative pedagogy in the Australian Curriculum to meet the diverse cultural and social needs of today's students (Ewing 2013; Gibson & Ewing 2011; Sonesson 2007). The exploration of interpreting visual narrative from different stances using a pedagogical approach from Rosenblatt's (1983) reader response theory is one way that could be further investigated.

Immersion in the visual also requires a theoretically motivated approach for teaching and learning about how meaning is made and how to interpret meaning potentials in non-linguistic visual for classroom use and for our everyday lives. As this study has demonstrated a theoretically motivated metalanguage was a powerful tool for providing the participating students with an opportunity for a focussed and critical interpretation of visual writing prompts. I would argue that a semiotically orientated metalanguage is one of the best abstract tools for thinking about how image works and, using a shared vocabulary assists viewers articulate possible meanings both orally and in written form. There is an urgent need to develop teachers' knowledge about visual semiosis because, as the expert mediators in classrooms, a theoretically motivated metalanguage provides them with tools to render visible a range of possible readings of image in teaching and assessments cycles for critical and informed interpretations of visual texts.

7.6. To conclude

This study has described how four students responded to visual prompts for composing and the resources they drew on to do this. It centred on how the visual prompts used in large-scale writing assessments shape students writing of narrative. It is hoped that educators may benefit from the findings and, in doing so, consider all that is being asked of students when they undertake these types of standardised assessments. The study challenged the cultural and value neutral assumption that can be made about the picture aspect of visual prompts, identifying the impact that the non-linguistic visual aspect can play on the types of ideas generated and subsequent writing.

The challenges experienced by the four students in this study included working with more complex compositional designs in assessment prompts with an the increase in the amount of possible meanings to interpret paralleled with more writing expected in the same writing time as earlier BST writing assessments. I would claim that these findings change *'the rules of the game,'* placing the visual prompt as a significant player in the assessment process begging the question to be asked about what the NAPLAN writing assessment is actually testing.

Recognising the capability of image as a full communicator of meaning means more than just using this semiotic resource as a stimulus in everyday classroom or in large-scale writing assessment prompts. The way a single 'snapshot' narrative picture communicates meaning can be different from the way other modes express meaning and the way multiple narrative pictures portray meaning such as those used in picture books or film requiring particular ways of unpacking. These changes can be complex, requiring somewhat sophisticated tools and vocabulary to articulate meanings and knowledge about the different ways pictures mean in various modes and for various purposes. Teaching students to interpret and express their interpretations of this visual semiotic requires a move to an explicit study of pictures on the learning continuum. Doing more for learning in transformative practice needs to make learning visible and explicit (ACER 2010; Hattie 2012). This involves 'stretching out' the transformative and transductive moves required when reading visual. In particular, the 'transductive nub' where students change the ideas they generate from semiotically rich multimodal visual resources to the written form requires complex and recursive work involving explicit attention in writing lessons. I would argue that developing skills to undertake the process of translation from initial interest, through engagement, selection and framing meanings construed from pictures would benefit from the application of a semiotically orientated metalanguage.

Investigating the role of a visual prompt for stimulating students' writing, this study has focussed on the context of the use of image in large-scale writing assessments such as the previous state based BST and the current national assessment for literacy (NAPLAN). The Whitlam Institute (2013) has concluded that NAPLAN may be defined as high-stakes with current literacy levels announced to the broader community as public information (ACARA 2012). At the same time the report from the Senate Inquiry into NAPLAN (Commonwealth of Australia 2014) has conceded that to date this testing regime provides a limited view of the total representation of a student's literacy level.

Therefore investigating the factors impacting student outcomes in these types of assessments is imperative.

The point I make here is that pedagogical practice should not be driven by the *'audit mentality'* (Kostogriz & Doecke 2013) that pressures educators to teach to a test. Nor should the visual prompt be regarded as a naturally accessible component in writing assessments. As my study has demonstrated, four literate students showed that the NAPLAN visual writing prompts can leave novice critical readers of visual stranded, despite their avid reading, viewing and high engagement with the narrative genre. My study continues the discussion about how an innovative pedagogy with respect to teaching of narrative image across the curriculum in needed (Ewing 2011). I have applied social semiotics to primary educational contexts and practices by developing and conducting initial implementation of an educational framework for guiding classroom talk about and interpretation of a single frame narrative image. It lends fresh support to the line of research on the effect of systemic functional linguistics based grammatics on students' reading and writing development (Ewing 2006; Halliday 1985: Rosenblatt 1983).

Understanding the role that non-linguistic visual plays in national writing assessments may assist in designing educational coursework that includes an explicit, cumulative semiotically orientated metalanguage as a tool for students to unpack meaning potentials in these types of narrative visual stimuli. It also provides a framework for teachers to use as they talk about single snapshot images as stimuli for writing narrative in their classroom writing lessons. It also hopefully brings attention to the role an image in writing assessment prompts plays as one of the determining factors in student outcomes thus bringing to bear the critical nature of the content represented and the way it is organised visually on an assessment prompt page.

Appendices

Appendix B

Permission was granted by the NSW Department of Education and Communities to use the following Basic Skills (BST) and National Assessment Plan Writing (NAPLAN) Assessment prompts in the study:

- The 2000 BST writing prompt image '*Rosie'*
- The 2004 BST writing prompt image '*The Ancient Box'*
- The 2005 BST writing prompt image '*The Storm'*
- The 2007 BST writing prompt image '*The Egg'*
- The 2008 NAPLAN writing prompt image '*Found'*
- The 2009 NAPLAN writing prompt image '*The Box'*
- The 2010 NAPLAN writing prompt image '*What a Mess!'*

This appendix includes the analytical framework for undertaking detailed interpretations of these writing assessment prompts. Each subsequent appendix contains one of the above forementioned prompts, accompanied by a completed analytical framework.

The analytical framework includes text notes and grey shaded selections indicated by:

REPRESENTATIONAL MEANING *Agents and Agency* Identified theme or topic	Template page one						
Agents (characters and objects) Who is represented? *Agency* Who does what in the image?	an individual	a few individuals	a small group	small groups	a large group	large groups	a population
	Non-representational *Participants not seen but present*			Representational *Participants present*			
How are the characters represented? - - - ►							
	High stereotype			*Low stereotype*		*Individualistic*	

Processes Vectors representing actions	Action Transactional		Action Non-transactional		Reactional	
	Active	*Passive*	*Active*	*Passive*	*Transactional*	*Non-transactional*

Processes (agency / actions) What gets done? What does the action result in?	Actions with consequence					Actions without consequence
	Material	Behavioural	Mental	Verbal	Relational	Existential

Abstraction / realness / familiarity - - - ►	REAL / GIVEN familiar / everyday		some underlying values and topic		symbolic	IDEAL / NEW deeply abstract

APPENDIX A: Analytical Framework template

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Colour* ** In both foreground and background*	Template page two						
Colour: Brightness (Linked with illumination) – – – ▶	play of light / absence of shadow (pessimism, deception, lies)		Absence of light	dark and light	obvious light source	Extreme brightness (optimism, honesty, truth)	
		w					
Colour Features: Illumination (Glow or reflectiveness) – – – ▶	no light or shade (only lines used to show contours)		shading rather than shadows		Reflective	illumination and shadows (naturalism and play of light)	
Colour: Shade – – – ▶	flat / generic / unmodulated (simplified or fantasy world)					different shade/ fine nuances of a given colour (complex, natural, realistic world)	
Colour: Depth – – – ▶	no depth or perspective no overlapping		minimal depth or perspective simple overlapping			Deep perspective complex overlapping / multiple viewpoints	
Colour: Hue – – – ▶	cool colours (blues / greens) (cold, calm, distance)					warm colours(reds / oranges) (warmth, energy, vibrancy)	
Colour: Tone – – – ▶	two shades of tonal graduation (black+ white or one colour + two tones of that colour)					Maximum tonal graduation (multiple tones of colour)	
Colour: Transparency, modulation and saturation – – – ▶	transparency		mid range transparency			opaque	
Colour: Harmony and contrast – – – ▶	complementary colours harmonize		a range of complementary and contrasting colours			contrasting colours	

APPENDIX A: Analytical Framework template

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Perspective and atmosphere* *Setting: Foreground and background*	Template page three					
Perspective and atmosphere Depth – – – ►	Flat and frontal perspective		Some participants show 3D dimensions			Deep 3D perspective
Perspective: Lines, edges and textures – – – ►	Simplistic line drawing / cartoons Minimal detail and texture		highly defined participants			Sharp, finely grained / photographs textured and realistic
Perspective: Angles + Social Distance – – – ►	Close up Intimacy		Mid range			Distant Anonymity
Perspective: Angle of interaction Power relations – – – ►	looking down at the participant (vertical) Viewer has power over the participant		Looking at / across (horizontal) Equality		Looking up at the participant in the frame(vertical) Participant has power over the viewer	
Perspective: View	worm's eye view	bird's eye view	fish eye view	internal eye	frontal view	side view
Perspective: Orientation (Painter 2012)	back-to-back	back-face	face-to-face	side by side	face to viewer	back to viewer
Salience – – – ►	no dominant image		dominance with some images			focus on one feature
The Setting: *Foreground and background* Articulation in background – – – ►	contextualized / detailed background blurring of background (natural)		sharp lines indicating more artificial environment		decontextualised / no articulation in background irregular patterns / unmodulated	
Articulation in foreground – – – ►	no connection with location and setting		strong connection with location and setting		'hyper-real'	

APPENDIX A: Analytical Framework template

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Contact and feelings*	Template page four					
Ambience / Atmosphere / Emotional pull – – – ►	Positive judgment and overall feeling about the image			Neutral	Negative judgment and overall feeling about the image	
Contact: Focalisation *Vectors:* Social relations enacted through the gaze a) Between characters	No gaze or involvement (observe)	Side-on looking out of frame (offer)	Provide information (offer)	Side-on looking / Glimpse / inviting (low demand)	Direct gaze-confrontational / Close contact (high demand)	
b) Between character/s and sign-reader	No direct gaze = no involvement *Sign-reader is placed as an observer.*	Unmediated	Mediated + inferred	Mediated along with *the character Sign-reader looking over the character's shoulder.*	Mediated as if character *Sign-reader is placed as character on angle.*	Direct gaze *Character is looking directly at sign-reader.*

APPENDIX A: Analytical Framework template

COMPOSITIONAL MEANING *Framing* *Triptychs / Centre / Margin*	Template page five					
Dominance of and interaction between semiotic resources	Image is central		Image and text co-exist			Text central
	image dominant	polarizes: centre acts as a mediator	balances	symmetrical	interwoven	verbiage dominant
Placement of verbiage and image in the text	Adjacent *Horizontal plane*		*Vertical plane*		Interrupted *Interpolating*	
	verbiage on left image on right	image on left verbiage on right	image above verbiage below	verbiage above image below	image-verbiage-image	verbiage-image-verbiage
Position in the horizontal frame	left margin immorality, sacred		centre			right margin goodness, everyday
Position in the vertical frame	top margin (high in the frame) high power, positive mood, high class, idealist, sacred				bottom margin (low in the frame) low power, low class, grounded, realistic	
Image Hotspots	1/3 rule	diagonal axial	single centered	triptych centered	random scattering	
	dividing and matching	dividing and facing	serialized	vertical / horizontal mirroring		
Frame Size – – – ►	small spaces / varied placements		space between image and frame balanced			large spaces
Frame Integration	Separates: The physical frame creates a difference	Separates: Separated by spaces within the frame	Integrates / Connects: resources occupy the same space white or colour	Overlaps: Elements 'bleed' into other images' spaces	Mediates: Create links between the elements	Contrasts: Indicate differences between elements
Framing Choices: Margins	Bounded by a Margin				Unbounded: no Margin	
	re-focalized white	ambient coloured	contained all within	breached breaks	surrounded all around	limited partial	contextualized individuated/ fills page	localised iconic /minimal	decontextualised no setting

APPENDIX A: Analytical Framework template

WRITING TASK ONE

Here is the beginning of a story.

More than anything else Rosie wanted to be like other night-fright monsters.

She listened to their boastful stories about frightening grandpas in striped pyjamas and creeping up on little children in their beds. She dreamed about rustling curtains and rattling windows and being bold and brave and scary.

But Rosie was afraid.

This story by Susan King is about a monster called Rosie. Readers get a special feeling about Rosie because of the way the story begins.

The beginning of the story includes:

- **adjectives** or describing words like – *boastful, striped, bold, brave, scary*
- **verbs** or action words like – *listened, frightening, creeping up, dreamed*
- **descriptions** that help the reader get to know and understand Rosie's feelings, like –

  More than anything else Rosie wanted to be like other night-fright monsters.

  Rosie was afraid.

Write the beginning to your own story.

Remember to describe your character or characters.

- You should write in sentences.
- You should pay attention to spelling and punctuation.
- You should also make sure that you write only the beginning of a story.
- You have time and space to plan your writing.

APPENDIX B1: The BST writing prompt '*Rosie*' (DET 2000) and completed analytical framework

REPRESENTATIONAL MEANING *Agents and Agency* Identified theme or topic	**'Rosie' (DET 2000)**						
Agents (characters and objects) Who is represented? *Agency* Who does what in the image?	an individual	a few individuals	a small group	small groups	a large group	large groups	a population
	Main character	*Two characters in a thought bubble.*					
	Non-representational *Participants not seen but present*			Representational *Participants present*			
How are the characters represented? - - - ►				*Characters in dream* + *Main character in natural world represented*			
	High stereotype			*Low stereotype*		*Individualistic*	
Processes Vectors representing actions	Action Transactional		Action Non-transactional		Reactional		
	Active	*Passive*	*Active*	*Passive*	*Transactional*	*Non-transactional*	
Processes (agency / actions) What gets done? What does the action result in?	Actions with consequence					Actions without consequence	
	Material	Behavioural	Mental	Verbal	Relational	Existential	
		A behavioural consequence between characters in the dream	*Main character is depicted thinking or dreaming*		*Connections between all participants through vectors*		
Abstraction / realness / familiarity - - - ►	REAL / GIVEN familiar / everyday		some underlying values and topic		symbolic	IDEAL / NEW deeply abstract	
		Locative circumstances suggest a real environment		*Creature's dream is ideal by nature but depicts an everyday experience for the imaginary character.*	*Circumstance of means using the thought bubble represents an ideal or imagined experience*	*Creatures like these are not real nor is the experience based in our real world.*	

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Colour* ** In both foreground and background*	**'Rosie' (DET 2000)** *continued*						
Colour: Brightness (Linked with illumination) - - - ►	play of light / absence of shadow (pessimism, deception, lies)		Absence of light	dark and light	obvious light source	Extreme brightness (optimism, honesty, truth)	
		No shadow				*Highly saturated*	
Colour Features: Illumination (Glow or reflectiveness) - - - ►	no light or shade (only lines used to show contours)		shading rather than shadows		Reflective	illumination and shadows (naturalism and play of light)	
Colour: Shade - - - ►	flat / generic / unmodulated (simplified or fantasy world)					different shade/ fine nuances of a given colour (complex, natural, realistic world)	
	Tones rather than a light source						
Colour: Depth - - - ►	no depth or perspective no overlapping		minimal depth or perspective simple overlapping			Deep perspective complex overlapping / multiple viewpoints	
	Characters in dream		*Creature's elbows and dream out of the frame.*				
Colour: Hue - - - ►	cool colours (blues / greens) (cold, calm, distance)					warm colours(reds / oranges) (warmth, energy, vibrancy)	
	Dark blues suggests night time setting					*Warm reds and complementary with characters in the dream and Rosie's face.*	
Colour: Tone - - - ►	two shades of tonal graduation (black+ white or one colour + two tones of that colour)					Maximum tonal graduation (multiple tones of colour)	
				Differentiated colours but minimal tones of each colour			
Colour: Transparency, modulation and saturation - - - ►	transparency		mid range transparency			opaque	
Colour: Harmony and contrast - - - ►	complementary colours harmonize		a range of complementary and contrasting colours			contrasting colours	

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Perspective and atmosphere* *Setting: Foreground and background*	**'Rosie' (DET 2000)** *continued*					
Perspective and atmosphere Depth - - - ►	Flat and frontal perspective		Some participants show 3D dimensions			Deep 3D perspective
		Frontal perspective		*3D created by tonal gradations not perspective*		
Perspective: Lines, edges and textures - - - ►	Simplistic line drawing / cartoons Minimal detail and texture		highly defined participants			Sharp, finely grained / photographs textured and realistic
		Participants in dream		*Lines show texture*		
Perspective: Angles + Social Distance - - - ►	Close up Intimacy		Mid range			Distant Anonymity
			Rosie			*Participants in dream*
Perspective: Angle of interaction Power relations - - - ►	looking down at the participant (vertical) Viewer has power over the participant		Looking at / across (horizontal) Equality		Looking up at the participant in the frame(vertical) Participant has power over the viewer	
Perspective: View	worm's eye view	bird's eye view	fish eye view	internal eye	frontal view	side view
Perspective: Orientation (Painter 2012)	back-to-back	back-face	face-to-face	side by side	face to viewer	back to viewer
			Participants in dream		*Rosie faces viewer but eyes up*	
Salience - - - ►	no dominant image		dominance with some images			focus on one feature
			Dominance through size			
The Setting: *Foreground and background* Articulation in background - - - ►	contextualized / detailed background blurring of background (natural)		sharp lines indicating more artificial environment		decontextualised / no articulation in background irregular patterns / unmodulated	
		Lines and shapes blur in background		*Sharp lines used for cartoon characters*		
Articulation in foreground - - - ►	no connection with location and setting		strong connection with location and setting		'hyper-real'	
	In dream			*Rosie*	*Highly saturation colour / minimal variation*	

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Contact and feelings*	**Rosie (DET 2000)** *continued*						
Ambience / Atmosphere / Emotional pull - - - ►	Positive judgment and overall feeling about the image			Neutral	Negative judgment and overall feeling about the image		
			Main character +				*Characters in dream -*
Contact: Focalisation *Vectors:* Social relations enacted through the gaze a) Between characters	No gaze or involvement (observe)	Side-on looking out of frame (offer)	Provide information (offer)	Side-on looking / Glimpse / inviting (low demand)	Direct gaze-confrontational / Close contact (high demand)		
	Main character looking up but non transactional						*Characters in dream in direct eye contact and high demand*
b) Between character/s and sign-reader	No direct gaze = no involvement *Sign-reader is placed as an observer.*	Unmediated	Mediated + inferred	Mediated along with *the character Sign-reader looking over the character's shoulder.*	Mediated as if character *Sign-reader is placed as character on angle.*		Direct gaze *Character is looking directly at sign-reader.*

COMPOSITIONAL MEANING *Framing* *Triptychs / Centre / Margin*	**'Rosie' (DET 2000)** *continued*					
Dominance of and interaction between semiotic resources	Image is central		Image and text co-exist			Text central
	image dominant	polarizes: centre acts as a mediator	balances	symmetrical	interwoven	verbiage dominant
		interpolating				
Placement of verbiage and image in the text	Adjacent *Horizontal plane*		*Vertical plane*		Interrupted *Interpolating*	
	verbiage on left image on right	image on left verbiage on right	image above verbiage below	verbiage above image below	image-verbiage-image	verbiage-image-verbiage
Position in the horizontal frame	left margin immorality, sacred		centre			right margin goodness, everyday
Position in the vertical frame	top margin (high in the frame) high power, positive mood, high class, idealist, sacred				bottom margin (low in the frame) low power, low class, grounded, realistic	
Image Hotspots	1/3 rule	diagonal axial	single centered	triptych centered	random scattering	
	dividing and matching	dividing and facing	serialized	vertical / horizontal mirroring		
Frame Size - - - ►	small spaces / varied placements		space between image and frame balanced			large spaces
Frame Integration	Separates: The physical frame creates a difference	Separates: Separated by spaces within the frame	Integrates / Connects: resources occupy the same space white or colour	Overlaps: Elements 'bleed' into other images' spaces	Mediates: Create links between the elements	Contrasts: Indicate differences between elements
		Some text uses same colour background – cohesion through colour				

Writing Task Two

Look at the picture below and read the beginning of the story.

Walking into Grandfather's shed was like stepping back in time. It contained old furniture and books that were yellow with age.

I loved exploring in the shed, as every time I did I found something different. Last Sunday I discovered an ancient box. It was carved on the front and sides with unusual markings.

Slowly I undid the clasp and opened it.

Imagine you are the person in this story.

Write about what happened when you opened the box.

- You can continue the story but you do not have to finish it.
- Make something exciting happen in your story.
- Use descriptive words and phrases to make your writing interesting for someone to read.

- You should write in sentences.
- Pay attention to spelling and punctuation.
- You have time and space for planning.

Primary Writing Assessment 2004

APPENDIX B2: The BST writing prompt 'The Ancient Box' (DET 2004) and completed analytical framework

REPRESENTATIONAL MEANING *Agents and Agency* Identified theme or topic	**'The Ancient Box' (DET 2004)**						
Agents (characters and objects) Who is represented? *Agency* Who does what in the image?	an individual	some individuals	a small group	small groups	a large group	large groups	a population
	Non-representational *Participants not seen but present*			Representational *Participants present*			
How are the characters represented? - - - ►	*Object present characters assumed*						
	High stereotype			*Low stereotype*		*Individualistic*	

Processes Vectors representing actions	Action Transactional		Action Non-transactional		Reactional	
	Active	*Passive*	*Active*	*Passive*	*Transactional*	*Non-transactional*

Processes (agency / actions) What gets done? What does the action result in?	Actions with consequence					Actions without consequence
	Material	Behavioural	Mental	Verbal	Relational	Existential

Abstraction / realness / familiarity - - - ►	REAL / GIVEN familiar / everyday		some underlying values and topic		symbolic	IDEAL / NEW deeply abstract
					Conflicting messages. Realistic box, but symbolic and ancient script that brings codes to the image.	

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Colour* ** In both foreground and background*	**'The Ancient Box' (DET 2004)** *continued*						
Colour: Brightness (Linked with illumination) - - - ►	play of light / absence of shadow (pessimism, deception, lies)		Absence of light	dark and light	obvious light source	Extreme brightness (optimism, honesty, truth)	
Colour Features: Illumination (Glow or reflectiveness) - - - ►	no light or shade (only lines used to show contours)		shading rather than shadows		Reflective	illumination and shadows (naturalism and play of light)	
Colour: Shade - - - ►	flat / generic / unmodulated (simplified or fantasy world)					different shade/ fine nuances of a given colour (complex, natural, realistic world)	
Colour: Depth - - - ►	no depth or perspective no overlapping		minimal depth or perspective simple overlapping			Deep perspective complex overlapping / multiple viewpoints	
Colour: Hue - - - ►	cool colours (blues / greens) (cold, calm, distance)					warm colours(reds / oranges) (warmth, energy, vibrancy)	
					Earthy tones		
Colour: Tone - - - ►	two shades of tonal graduation (black+ white or one colour + two tones of that colour)					Maximum tonal graduation (multiple tones of colour)	
Colour: Transparency, modulation and saturation - - - ►	transparency		mid range transparency			opaque	
Colour: Harmony and contrast - - - ►	complementary colours harmonize		a range of complementary and contrasting colours			contrasting colours	
	Tones of brown and green						

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Perspective and atmosphere* *Setting: Foreground and background*	**'The Ancient Box' (DET 2004)** *continued*					
Perspective and atmosphere Depth - - - ►	flat and frontal perspective		some participants show 3D dimensions			deep 3D perspective
		Frontal perspective			*3D created by tonal gradations and perspective*	
Perspective: Lines, edges and textures - - - ►	simplest line drawing / cartoons Minimal detail and texture		highly defined participants		Sharp, finely grained / photographs textured and realistic	
					Drawn but highly textured through shading, hatching and detail	
Perspective: Angles + Social Distance - - - ►	close up Intimacy		Mid range			Distant Anonymity
Perspective: Angle of interaction Power relations	looking down at the participant (vertical) Viewer has power over the participant		Looking at / across (horizontal) Equality		Looking up at the participant in the frame(vertical) Participant has power over the viewer	
Perspective: View	worm's eye view	bird's eye view	fish eye view	internal eye	frontal view	side view
Perspective: Orientation (Painter 2012)	back-back	back-front	face-to-face	side by side	face to viewer	back to viewer
Salience - - - ►	no dominant image		dominance with some images			focus on one feature
			Dominance through commitment of size			
The Setting: *Foreground and background* Articulation in background - - - ►	contextualized / detailed background blurring of background (natural)		sharp lines indicating more artificial environment		decontextualised / no articulation in background irregular patterns / unmodulated	
						Modulated tones
Articulation in foreground - - - ►	no connection with location and setting		strong connection with location and setting		'hyper-real'	

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Contact and feelings*	**'The Ancient Box' (DET 2004)** *continued*						
Ambience / Atmosphere / Emotional pull - - - ►	Positive judgment and overall feeling about the image			Neutral	Negative judgment and overall feeling about the image		
Contact: Focalisation *Vectors:* Social relations enacted through the gaze a) Between characters	No gaze or involvement (observe)	Side-on looking out of frame (offer)	Provide information (offer)	Side-on looking / Glimpse / inviting (low demand)	Direct gaze-confrontational / Close contact (high demand)		
b) Between character/s and sign-reader	No direct gaze = no involvement *Sign-reader is placed as an observer.*	Unmediated	Mediated + inferred	Mediated along with *the character Sign-reader looking over the character's shoulder.*	Mediated as if character *Sign-reader is placed as character on angle.*	Direct gaze *Character is looking directly at sign-reader.*	

COMPOSITIONAL MEANING *Framing* *Triptychs / Centre / Margin*	**'The Ancient Box' (DET 2004)** *continued*					
Dominance of and interaction between semiotic resources	Image is central		Image and text co-exist			Text central
	image dominant	polarizes: centre acts as a mediator	balances	symmetrical	interwoven	verbiage dominant
Placement of verbiage and image in the text	Adjacent *Horizontal plane*		*Vertical plane*		Interrupted *Interpolating*	
	verbiage on left image on right	image on left - verbiage on right	image above verbiage below	verbiage above image below	image-verbiage-image	verbiage-image-verbiage
Position in the horizontal frame	left margin immorality, sacred		centre			right margin goodness, everyday
Position in the vertical frame	top margin (high in the frame) high power, positive mood, high class, idealist, sacred				bottom margin (low in the frame) low power, low class, grounded, realistic	
Image Hotspots	1/3 rule	diagonal axial	single centered	triptych centered	random scattering	
	dividing and matching	dividing and facing	serialized	vertical / horizontal mirroring		
Frame Size - - - ►	small spaces / varied placements		space between image and frame balanced			large spaces
		verbiage blocks vary				
Frame Integration	Separates: The physical frame creates a difference	Separates: Separated by spaces within the frame	Integrates / Connects: resources occupy the same space white or colour	Overlaps: Elements 'bleed' into other images' spaces	Mediates: Create links between the elements	Contrasts: Indicate differences between elements
	Majority of verbiage is de-focalized. One block of verbiage, dealing with the orientation of the narrative is integrated in the same frame as the image.					
Framing Choices: Margins	Bounded by a Margin re-focalized / ambient white / coloured	contained / breached all within / breaks	surrounded / limited all around / partial	Unbounded: no Margin contextualized / localised / decontextualised individuated/ fills page / iconic /minimal / no setting		
		Colour acts as a as a cohesive device				

BASIC SKILLS WRITING

Writing Task Two

Below is the beginning of a story. Imagine you are inside the house watching the storm outside.

Outside the wind howled ferociously, bending the huge trees as though they were little more than twigs. Brilliant flashes of lightning lit up the sky like fireworks, while all around us pelting rain lashed furiously at the windows.

We huddled together, worried there was worse to come.

The beginning of this story includes descriptive words and phrases
For example:

- words to describe actions and sounds – *bending, lashed furiously, howled ferociously*
- words to describe sights and feelings – *huge trees, brilliant flashes of lightning, pelting rain, worried*
- words to make a picture – *lit up the sky like fireworks*

Continue this story by describing more about what the storm was like, how you felt and what happened next.

- You should write more of the story. You do not have to finish it.
- Use descriptive words and phrases to make your story interesting and to make your readers feel how fierce the storm was.
- Write in sentences.
- Pay attention to spelling and punctuation.
- You have time and space to plan and edit your work.

APPENDIX B3: The BST writing prompt 'The Storm' (DET 2005) and completed analytical framework

REPRESENTATIONAL MEANING *Agents and Agency* Identified theme or topic	**'The Storm' (DET 2005)**						
Agents (characters and objects) Who is represented? *Agency* Who does what in the image?	an individual	a few individuals	a small group	small groups	a large group	large groups	a population
	Assumed						
	Non-representational *Participants not seen but present*			Representational *Participants present*			
How are the characters represented? - - - ►	*Event is present characters assumed*						
	High stereotype			*Low stereotype*		*Individualistic*	
Processes Vectors representing actions	Action Transactional		Action Non-transactional		Reactional		
	Active	*Passive*	*Active*	*Passive*	*Transactional*	*Non-transactional*	
Processes (agency / actions) What gets done? What does the action result in?	Actions with consequence					Actions without consequence	
	Material	Behavioural	Mental	Verbal	Relational	Existential	
Abstraction / realness / familiarity - - - ►	REAL / GIVEN familiar / everyday		some underlying values and topic		symbolic	IDEAL / NEW deeply abstract	

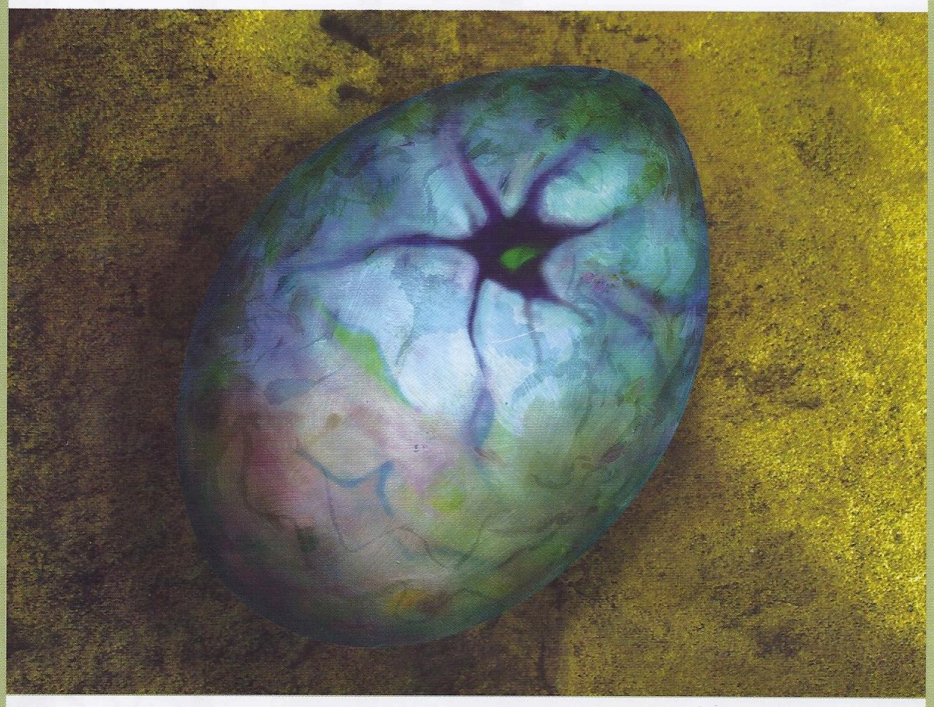
INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Colour* ** In both foreground and background*	**'The Storm' (DET 2005)** *continued*						
Colour: Brightness (Linked with illumination) - - - ►	play of light / absence of shadow (pessimism, deception, lies)		Absence of light	dark and light	obvious light source	Extreme brightness (optimism, honesty, truth)	
					Top corner of window frame shows internal light source		
Colour Features: Illumination (Glow or reflectiveness) - - - ►	no light or shade (only lines used to show contours)		shading rather than shadows		Reflective	illumination and shadows (naturalism and play of light)	
Colour: Shade - - - ►	flat / generic / unmodulated (simplified or fantasy world)					different shade/ fine nuances of a given colour (complex, natural, realistic world)	
Colour: Depth - - - ►	no depth or perspective no overlapping		minimal depth or perspective simple overlapping			Deep perspective complex overlapping / multiple viewpoints	
				Window overlaps background			
Colour: Hue - - - ►	cool colours (blues / greens) (cold, calm, distance)					warm colours(reds / oranges) (warmth, energy, vibrancy)	
Colour: Tone - - - ►	two shades of tonal graduation (black+ white or one colour + two tones of that colour)					Maximum tonal graduation (multiple tones of colour)	
Colour: Transparency, modulation and saturation - - - ►	transparency		mid range transparency			opaque	
Colour: Harmony and contrast - - - ►	complementary colours harmonize		a range of complementary and contrasting colours			contrasting colours	

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Perspective and atmosphere* *Setting: Foreground and background*	**'The Storm' (DET 2005)** *continued*					
Perspective and atmosphere Depth - - - ►	flat and frontal perspective		some participants show 3D dimensions			deep 3D perspective
		Frontal perspective			*3D created by tonal gradations and perspective*	
Perspective: Lines, edges and textures - - - ►	simplest line drawing / cartoons Minimal detail and texture		highly defined participants		Sharp, finely grained / photographs textured and realistic	
		background		*foreground*		
Perspective: Angles + Social Distance - - - ►	close up Intimacy		Mid range			Distant Anonymity
Perspective: Angle of interaction Power relations - - - ►	looking down at the participant (vertical) Viewer has power over the participant		Looking at / across (horizontal) Equality		Looking up at the participant in the frame(vertical) Participant has power over the viewer	
Perspective: View	worm's eye view	bird's eye view	fish eye view	internal eye	frontal view	side view
Perspective: Orientation	back-back	back-front	face-to-face	side by side	face to viewer	back to viewer
Salience - - - ►	no dominant image		dominance with some images			focus on one feature
		Scene with window frame containing activity				
The Setting: *Foreground and background* Articulation in background - - - ►	contextualized / detailed background blurring of background (natural)		sharp lines indicating more artificial environment		decontextualised / no articulation in background irregular patterns / unmodulated	
Articulation in foreground - - - ►	no connection with location and setting		strong connection with location and setting		'hyper-real'	

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Contact and feelings*	**'The Storm' (DET 2005)** *continued*					
Ambience / Atmosphere / Emotional pull - - - ►	Positive judgment and overall feeling about the image			Neutral	Negative judgment and overall feeling about the image	
Contact: Focalisation *Vectors:* Social relations enacted through the gaze a) Between characters	No gaze or involvement (observe)	Side-on looking out of frame (offer)	Provide information (offer)	Side-on looking / Glimpse / inviting (low demand)	Direct gaze-confrontational / Close contact (high demand)	
b) Between character/s and sign-reader	No direct gaze = no involvement *Sign-reader is placed as an observer.*	Unmediated	Mediated + inferred	Mediated along with *the character Sign-reader looking over the character's shoulder.*	Mediated as if character *Sign-reader is placed as character on angle.*	Direct gaze *Character is looking directly at sign-reader.*

COMPOSITIONAL MEANING *Framing* *Triptychs / Centre / Margin*	**'The Storm' (DET 2005)**					
Dominance of and interaction between semiotic resources	Image is central		Image and text co-exist			Text central
	image dominant	polarizes: centre acts as a mediator	balances	symmetrical	interwoven	verbiage dominant
Placement of verbiage and image in the text	Adjacent *Horizontal plane*		*Vertical plane*		Interrupted *Interpolating*	
	verbiage on left image on right	image on left verbiage on right	image above verbiage below	verbiage above image below	image-verbiage-image	verbiage-image-verbiage
Position in the horizontal frame	left margin immorality, sacred		centre			right margin goodness, everyday
Position in the vertical frame	top margin (high in the frame) high power, positive mood, high class, idealist, sacred				bottom margin (low in the frame) low power, low class, grounded, realistic	
Image Hotspots	1/3 rule	diagonal axial	single centered	triptych centered	random scattering	
	dividing and matching	dividing and facing	serialized	vertical / horizontal mirroring		
		In the top third hot spot				
Frame Size - - - ►	small spaces / varied placements		space between image and frame balanced			large spaces
		verbiage blocks vary				
Frame Integration	Separates: The physical frame creates a difference	Separates: Separated by spaces within the frame	Integrates / Connects: resources occupy the same space white or colour	Overlaps: Elements 'bleed' into other images' spaces	Mediates: Create links between the elements	Contrasts: Indicate differences between elements
	verbiage is de-focalized. One block shares verbiage and image.					
Framing Choices: Margins	Bounded by a Margin re-focalized white / ambient coloured	contained all within / breached breaks	surrounded all around / limited partial	Unbounded: no Margin contextualized individuated/ fills page	localised iconic /minimal	decontextualised no setting
		Colour acts as a as a cohesive device				

Look at the picture of the egg and read the beginning of the story.



When I found the egg it was rocking and making strange noises.

As I squatted down for a closer look a little dark hole appeared, with cracks running in all directions.

The egg was hatching!

Whatever was coming out of it was finding it hard. It wriggled and pushed and suddenly the egg split in half and out came the oddest little creature I had ever seen.

Continue the story.

- Write in sentences.
- Pay attention to spelling and punctuation.
- Use paragraphs to organise your writing.
- You have time to plan and edit your writing.

APPENDIX B4: BST Writing Prompt 'The Egg' (DET 2007) and completed analytical framework.

REPRESENTATIONAL MEANING **Agents and Agency** **Identified theme or topic**	**'The Egg' (DET 2007)**						
Agents (characters and objects) Who is represented? *Agency* Who does what in the image?	an individual	a few individuals	a small group	small groups	a large group	large groups	a population
	Non-representational *Participants not seen but present*			Representational *Participants present*			
How are the characters represented? - - - ►							
	High stereotype			*Low stereotype*		*Individualistic*	

Processes Vectors representing actions	Action Transactional		Action Non-transactional		Reactional	
	Active	*Passive*	*Active*	*Passive*	*Transactional*	*Non-transactional*

Processes (agency / actions) What gets done? What does the action result in?	Actions with consequence					Actions without consequence
	Material	Behavioural	Mental	Verbal	Relational	Existential
	Natural occurring event participants act as circumstantial connections	*Cracking egg*				

Abstraction / realness / familiarity - - - ►	REAL / GIVEN familiar / everyday		some underlying values and topic		symbolic	IDEAL / NEW deeply abstract
		Contrast between idealistic marbled colour suggesting imaginary creature Realistic event				

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Colour* ** In both foreground and background*	**'The Egg' (DET 2007)** *continued*						
Colour: Brightness (Linked with illumination) - - - ►	play of light / absence of shadow (pessimism, deception, lies)		Absence of light	dark and light	obvious light source	Extreme brightness (optimism, honesty, truth)	
	Absence of light within egg				*Top corner of window frame shows internal light source*		
Colour Features: Illumination (Glow or reflectiveness) - - - ►	no light or shade (only lines used to show contours)		shading rather than shadows		Reflective	illumination and shadows (naturalism and play of light)	
							Strong play of illumination and reflectiveness in the egg / shadow
Colour: Shade - - - ►	flat / generic / unmodulated (simplified or fantasy world)					different shade/ fine nuances of a given colour (complex, natural, realistic world)	
							Shadow projects depth, naturalism and element of time
Colour: Depth - - - ►	no depth or perspective no overlapping		minimal depth or perspective simple overlapping			Deep perspective complex overlapping / multiple viewpoints	
Colour: Hue - - - ►	cool colours (blues / greens) (cold, calm, distance)					warm colours(reds / oranges) (warmth, energy, vibrancy)	
				warm crimson inferring life / light			
Colour: Tone - - - ►	two shades of tonal graduation (black+ white or one colour + two tones of that colour)					Maximum tonal graduation (multiple tones of colour)	
Colour: Transparency, modulation and saturation - - - ►	transparency		mid range transparency			opaque	
		Egg surface				*Background surface*	
Colour: Harmony and contrast - - - ►	complementary colours harmonize		a range of complementary and contrasting colours			contrasting colours	

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Perspective and atmosphere* *Setting: Foreground and background*	**'The Egg' (DET 2007)** *continued*					
Perspective and atmosphere: Depth - - - ►	flat and frontal perspective		some participants show 3D dimensions			deep 3D perspective
		Frontal perspective			*3D created by tonal graduations*	
Perspective: Lines, edges and textures - - - ►	simplest line drawing / cartoons Minimal detail and texture		highly defined participants		Sharp, finely grained / photographs textured and realistic	
Perspective: Angles + Social Distance - - - ►	close up Intimacy		Mid range			Distant Anonymity
Perspective: Angle of interaction Power relations - - - ►	looking down at the participant (vertical) Viewer has power over the participant		Looking at / across (horizontal) Equality		Looking up at the participant in the frame(vertical) Participant has power over the viewer	
Perspective: View	worm's eye view	bird's eye view	fish eye view	internal eye	frontal view	side view
Perspective: Orientation (Painter 2012)	back-back	back-front	face-to-face	side by side	face to viewer	back to viewer
Salience - - - ►	no dominant image		dominance with some images			focus on one feature
			Dominance of image highlighted by use of size			
The Setting: Articulation in background - - - ►	contextualized / detailed background blurring of background (natural)		sharp lines indicating more artificial environment		decontextualised / no articulation in background irregular patterns / unmodulated	
	Contextualised detail in background	*Blurred edges in foreground*				
Articulation in foreground - - - ►	no connection with location and setting		strong connection with location and setting		'hyper-real'	

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Contact and feelings*	**'The Egg' (DET 2007)** *continued*						
Ambience / Atmosphere / Emotional pull - - - ►	Positive judgment and overall feeling about the image			Neutral	Negative judgment and overall feeling about the image		
Contact: Focalisation *Vectors:* Social relations enacted through the gaze a) Between characters	No gaze or involvement (observe)	Side-on looking out of frame (offer)	Provide information (offer)	Side-on looking / Glimpse / inviting (low demand)	Direct gaze-confrontational / Close contact (high demand)		
b) Between character/s and sign-reader	No direct gaze = no involvement *Sign-reader is placed as an observer.*	Unmediated	Mediated + inferred	Mediated along with *the character Sign-reader looking over the character's shoulder.*	Mediated as if character *Sign-reader is placed as character on angle.*	Direct gaze *Character is looking directly at sign-reader.*	

COMPOSITIONAL MEANING *Framing* *Triptychs / Centre / Margin*	**'The Egg' (DET 2007)** *continued*					
Dominance of and interaction between semiotic resources	Image is central		Image and text co-exist			Text central
	image dominant	polarizes: centre acts as a mediator	balances	symmetrical	interwoven	verbiage dominant
Placement of verbiage and image in the text	Adjacent horizontal plane		vertical plane		Interrupted	
	verbiage on left image on right	image on left verbiage on right	image above verbiage below	verbiage above image below	image-verbiage-image	verbiage-image-verbiage
Position in the horizontal frame	left margin immorality, sacred		centre			right margin goodness, everyday
Position in the vertical frame	top margin (high in the frame) high power, positive mood, high class, idealist, sacred				bottom margin (low in the frame) low power, low class, grounded, realistic	
Image Hotspots	1/3 rule	diagonal axial	single centered	triptych centered	random scattering	
	dividing and matching	dividing and facing	serialized	vertical / horizontal mirroring		
Frame Size - - - ►	small spaces / varied placements		space between image and frame balanced			large spaces
		verbiage blocks vary but white and ambience background are balanced				
Frame Integration	Separates: The physical frame creates a difference	Separates: Separated by spaces within the frame	Integrates / Connects: resources occupy the same space white or colour	Overlaps: Elements 'bleed' into other images' spaces	Mediates: Create links between the elements	Contrasts: Indicate differences between elements
Framing Choices: Margins	Bounded by a Margin re-focalized white / ambient coloured	contained all within / breached breaks	surrounded all around / limited partial	Unbounded: no Margin contextualized individuated/ fills page	localised iconic /minimal	decontextualised no setting
		Colour acts as a as a cohesive device				

APPENDIX B5: The NAPLAN writing prompt 'Found' (DET 2008) and completed analytical framework

REPRESENTATIONAL MEANING *Agents and Agency* Identified theme or topic	**'Found' (DET 2008)**						
Agents (characters and objects) Who is represented? *Agency* Who does what in the image?	an individual	a few individuals	a small group	small groups	a large group	large groups	a population
	Non-representational *Participants not seen but present*			Representational *Participants present*			
How are the characters represented? - - - ►							
	High stereotype			*Low stereotype*		*Individualistic*	
Processes Vectors representing actions *Various vectors connecting different representational meaning (inadvertently) in this NAPLAN prompt*	Action Transactional		Action Non-transactional		Reactional		
	Active	*Passive*	*Active*	*Passive*	*Transactional*	*Non-transactional*	
Processes (agency / actions) What gets done? What does the action result in? *Various processes in this prompt*	Actions with consequence					Actions without consequence	
	Material	Behavioural	Mental	Verbal	Relational	Existential	
Abstraction / realness / familiarity - - - ►	REAL / GIVEN familiar / everyday		some underlying values and topic		symbolic	IDEAL / NEW deeply abstract	
						Arthropod is abstract representation	

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Colour* ** In both foreground and background*	**'Found' (DET 2008)** *continued*						
Colour: Brightness (Linked with illumination) - - - ►	play of light / absence of shadow (pessimism, deception, lies)		Absence of light	dark and light	obvious light source	Extreme brightness (optimism, honesty, truth)	
					Difficult to classify. Multiple uses		
Colour Features: Illumination (Glow or reflectiveness) - - - ►	no light or shade (only lines used to show contours)		shading rather than shadows		Reflective	illumination and shadows (naturalism and play of light)	
							Naturalistic photographs life imitating
Colour: Shade - - - ►	flat / generic / unmodulated (simplified or fantasy world)					different shade/ fine nuances of a given colour (complex, natural, realistic world)	
Colour: Depth - - - ►	no depth or perspective no overlapping		minimal depth or perspective simple overlapping			Deep perspective complex overlapping / multiple viewpoints	
Colour: Hue - - - ►	cool colours (blues / greens) (cold, calm, distance)					warm colours(reds / oranges) (warmth, energy, vibrancy)	
	Background suggests gloom						*Background opposes foreground*
Colour: Tone - - - ►	two shades of tonal graduation (black+ white or one colour + two tones of that colour)					Maximum tonal graduation (multiple tones of colour)	
Colour: Transparency, modulation and saturation - - - ►	transparency		mid range transparency			opaque	
	Magnifying glass						
Colour: Harmony and contrast	complementary colours harmonize		a range of complementary and contrasting colours			contrasting colours	
					range		

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Perspective and atmosphere* *Setting: Foreground and background*	**'Found' (DET 2008)** *continued*					
Perspective and atmosphere Depth – – – ►	flat and frontal perspective perspective		some participants show 3D dimensions			deep 3D
Perspective: Lines, edges and textures – – – ►	Simplistic line drawing / cartoons Minimal detail and texture		highly defined participants			Sharp, finely grained / photographs textured and realistic
Perspective: Angles + Social Distance – – – ►	close up Intimacy		Mid range			Distant Anonymity
Perspective: Angle of interaction Power relations – – – ►	looking down at the participant (vertical)		Looking at / across (horizontal)		Looking up at the participant in the frame(vertical)	
	Viewer has power over the participant		Equality		Participant has power over the viewer	
						Multiple positions
Perspective: View	worm's eye view	bird's eye view	fish eye view	internal eye	frontal view	side view
Perspective: Orientation	back-to-back	back-to-front	face-to-face	Side-by-side	face to viewer	back to viewer
Salience – – – ►	no dominant image		dominance with some images			focus on one feature
	Size?					
The Setting: *Foreground and background* Articulation in background – – – ►	contextualized / detailed background				decontextualised / no articulation in background	
	blurring of background (natural)		sharp lines indicating more artificial environment			irregular patterns / unmodulated
Articulation in foreground – – – ►	no connection with location and setting		strong connection with location and setting			'hyper-real'

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Contact and feelings*	**'Found' (DET 2008)** *continued*						
Ambience / Atmosphere / Emotional pull - - - ►	Positive judgment and overall feeling about the image			Neutral	Negative judgment and overall feeling about the image		
Contact: Focalisation *Vectors:* Social relations enacted through the gaze a) Between characters *Varies throughout prompt*	No gaze or involvement (observe)	Side-on looking out of frame (offer)	Provide information (offer)	Side-on looking / Glimpse / inviting (low demand)	Direct gaze-confrontational / Close contact (high demand)		
b) Between character/s and sign-reader *Varies throughout prompt*	No direct gaze = no involvement *Sign-reader is placed as an observer.*	Unmediated	Mediated + inferred	Mediated along with *the character Sign-reader looking over the character's shoulder.*	Mediated as if character *Sign-reader is placed as character on angle.*	Direct gaze *Character is looking directly at sign-reader.*	

COMPOSITIONAL MEANING	**'Found' (DET 2008)** *continued*					
Dominance of and interaction between semiotic resources	Image is central		Image and text co-exist			Text central
	image dominant	polarizes: centre acts as a mediator	balances	symmetrical	interwoven	verbiage dominant
Placement of verbiage and image in the text	Adjacent horizontal plane		vertical plane		Interrupted	
	verbiage on left image on right	image on left ->\ verbiage on right	image above verbiage below	verbiage above image below	image-verbiage-image	verbiage-image-verbiage
					Images surround words that are central with experiential frame	
Position in the horizontal frame *This compositional design cannot be applied for this NAPLAN design*	left margin immorality, sacred		centre			right margin goodness, everyday
Position in the vertical frame *This compositional design cannot be applied for this NAPLAN design*	top margin (high in the frame) high power, positive mood, high class, idealist, sacred					bottom margin (low in the frame) low power, low class, grounded, realistic
Image Hotspots	1/3 rule	diagonal axial	single centered	triptych centered	random scattering	vertical / horizontal mirroring
	dividing and matching	dividing and facing	serialized			
Frame Size - - - ►	small spaces / varied placements		space between image and frame balanced			large spaces
Frame Integration	Separates: The physical frame creates a difference	Separates: Separated by spaces within the frame	Integrates / Connects: resources occupy the same space white or colour	Overlaps: Elements 'bleed' into other images' spaces	Mediates: Create links between the elements	Contrasts: Indicate differences between elements
Framing Choices: Margins	Bounded by a Margin re-focalized ambient white coloured	contained breached all within breaks	surrounded limited all around partial	Unbounded: no Margin contextualized	localised	decontextualised
				individuated/ fills page	iconic /minimal	no setting
				various		

The Box

Today you are going to write a narrative or story.

The idea for your story is “The Box”.

What is inside the box? How did it get there?
Is it valuable? Perhaps it is alive!

The box might reveal a message or something that was hidden.

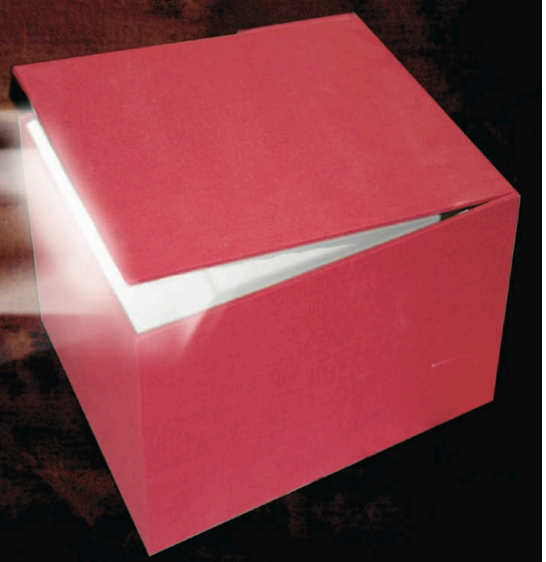
What happens in your story if the box is opened?

Think about:

- the characters and where they are
- the complication or problem to be solved
- how the story will end.

Remember to:

- plan your story before you start
- write in sentences
- pay attention to the words you choose, your spelling and punctuation, and paragraphs
- check and edit your writing when you have finished.



APPENDIX B6: The NAPLAN writing prompt ‘The Red Box’ (ACARA 2009) and completed analytical framework

REPRESENTATIONAL MEANING *Agents and Agency* Identified theme or topic	**'The Box' (DET 2009)**						
Agents (characters and objects) Who is represented? *Agency* Who does what in the image?	an individual	a few individuals	a small group	small groups	a large group	large groups	a population
	Non-representational *Participants not seen but present*			Representational *Participants present*			
How are the characters represented? - - - ►							
	High stereotype			*Low stereotype*		*Individualistic*	
Processes Vectors representing actions	Action Transactional		Action Non-transactional		Reactional		
	Active	*Passive*	*Active*	*Passive*	*Transactional*	*Non-transactional*	
Processes (agency / actions) What gets done? What does the action result in?	Actions with consequence					Actions without consequence	
	Material	Behavioural	Mental	Verbal	Relational	Existential	
Abstraction / realness / familiarity - - - ►	REAL / GIVEN familiar / everyday		some underlying values and topic		symbolic	IDEAL / NEW deeply abstract	
	Common box					*Mysterious light source*	

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Colour* ** In both foreground and background*	**'The Box' (DET 2009)** *continued*						
Colour: Brightness (Linked with illumination) - - - ►	play of light / absence of shadow (pessimism, deception, lies)		Absence of light source	dark and light	obvious light	Extreme brightness (optimism, honesty, truth)	
		In background					*In light and box*
Colour Features: Illumination (Glow or reflectiveness) - - - ►	no light or shade (only lines used to show contours)		shading rather than shadows		Reflective	illumination and shadows (naturalism and play of light)	
	In background		*No shadow or modulation in box*		*In light source*		
Colour: Shade - - - ►	flat / generic / unmodulated colour (simplified or fantasy world)					different shade/ fine nuances of a given (complex, natural, realistic world)	
	In box						
Colour: Depth - - - ►	no depth or perspective no overlapping viewpoints		minimal depth or perspective simple overlapping			Deep perspective complex overlapping / multiple	
				Some overlapping of light rays			*View of box*
Colour: Hue - - - ►	cool colours (blues / greens) (cold, calm, distance)					warm colours(reds / oranges) (warmth, energy, vibrancy)	
	In background						*In box and light*
Colour: Tone - - - ►	two shades of tonal graduation (black+ white or one colour + two tones of that colour)					Maximum tonal graduation (multiple tones of colour)	
			minimal tonal variation				
Colour: Transparency, modulation and saturation - - - ►	transparency			mid range transparency			opaque
	In light source						*In box and background*
Colour: Harmony and contrast - - - ►	complementary colours harmonize			a range of complementary and contrasting colours			contrasting colours
	Reds and browns harmonize						*Red and white contrast*

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Perspective and atmosphere* *Setting: Foreground and background*	**'The Box' (DET 2009)** *continued*					
Perspective and atmosphere Depth - - - ►	flat and frontal perspective		some participants show 3D dimensions			deep 3D perspective
						Box has deep perspective
Perspective: Lines, edges and textures - - - ►	simplest line drawing / cartoons Minimal detail and texture		highly defined participants		Sharp, finely grained / photographs textured and realistic	
	Sharp lines in foreground object, blurred edges on light source but minimal detail – generic object				*textured brushstrokes in background*	
Perspective: Angles + Social Distance - - - ►	close up Intimacy		Mid range			Distant Anonymity
Perspective: Angle of interaction Power relations - - - ►	looking down at the participant (vertical) Viewer has power over the participant		Looking at / across (horizontal) Equality		Looking up at the participant in the frame(vertical) Participant has power over the viewer	
Perspective: View	worm's eye view	bird's eye view	fish eye view	internal eye	frontal view	side view
Perspective: Orientation	back-to-back	back-to-front	face-to-face	side by side	face to viewer	back to viewer
					No human participants	
Salience - - - ►	no dominant image		dominance with some images			focus on one feature
The Setting: *Foreground and background* Articulation in background - - - ►	contextualized / detailed background blurring of background (natural)		sharp lines indicating more artificial environment		decontextualised / no articulation in background irregular patterns / unmodulated	
					No articulation *Patterned brushstrokes for background*	
Articulation in foreground - - - ►	no connection with location and setting		strong connection with location and setting		'hyper-real'	
	Minimal modulation of shades of colour - no defined participants in background					*All sharp edges on box no blurring into distance*

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Contact and feelings*	**'The Box' (DET 2009)** *continued*					
Ambience / Atmosphere / Emotional pull - - - ►	Positive judgment and overall feeling about the image			Neutral	Negative judgment and overall feeling about the image	
Contact: Focalisation *Vectors:* Social relations enacted through the gaze a) Between characters	No gaze or involvement (observe)	Side-on looking out of frame (offer)	Provide information (offer)	Side-on looking / Glimpse / inviting (low demand)	Direct gaze-confrontational / Close contact (high demand)	
b) Between character/s and sign-reader	No direct gaze = no involvement *Sign-reader is placed as an observer.*	Unmediated	Mediated + inferred	Mediated along with *the character Sign-reader looking over the character's shoulder.*	Mediated as if character *Sign-reader is placed as character on angle.*	Direct gaze *Character is looking directly at sign-reader.*

COMPOSITIONAL MEANING *Framing* *Triptychs / Centre / Margin*	**'The Box' (DET 2009)** *continued*					
Dominance of and interaction between semiotic resources	Image is central		Image and text co-exist			Text central
	image dominant	polarizes: centre acts as a mediator	balances	symmetrical	interwoven	verbiage dominant
Placement of verbiage and image in the text	Adjacent *Horizontal plane*		*Vertical plane*		Interrupted *Interpolating*	
	verbiage on left image on right	image on left verbiage on right	image above verbiage below	verbiage above image below	image-verbiage-image	verbiage-image-verbiage
Position in the horizontal frame	left margin immorality, sacred		centre			right margin goodness, everyday
Position in the vertical frame	top margin (high in the frame) high power, positive mood, high class, idealist, sacred				bottom margin (low in the frame) low power, low class, grounded, realistic	
Image Hotspots	1/3 rule	diagonal axial	single centered	triptych centered	random scattering	vertical / horizontal mirroring
	dividing and matching	dividing and facing	serialized			
Frame Size - - - ►	small spaces / varied placements		space between image and frame balanced			large spaces
Frame Integration	Separates: The physical frame creates a difference	Separates: Separated by spaces within the frame	Integrates / Connects: resources occupy the same space white or colour	Overlaps: Elements 'bleed' into other images' spaces	Mediates: Create links between the elements	Contrasts: Indicate differences between elements
Framing Choices: Margins	re-focalized ambient white coloured	Bounded by a Margin contained breached all within breaks	surrounded limited all around partial	Unbounded: no Margin contextualized	localised	decontextualised
				individuated/ fills page	iconic /minimal	no setting
					Only tonal backgrour	

‘What a mess!’

Today you are going to write a narrative (a story).
The idea for your story is ‘What a mess!’

Your story might be about a messy person, an untidy place or a complicated or tricky situation.

It might be a mix-up between people, or it might be about a plan gone wrong.

It could be about a broken promise or friendship, or an unexpected event that causes confusion.

Think about:

- the characters in your story
- when and where your story takes place
- the complication or problem and how it is solved
- how the story ends.

Remember to:

- plan your story before you start
- choose your words carefully
- write in sentences
- pay attention to your spelling, punctuation and paragraphs
- check and edit your writing.

APPENDIX B7: The NAPLAN writing prompt‘ What a Mess!’ (ACARA 2010) and analytical framework

REPRESENTATIONAL MEANING *Agents and Agency* Identified theme or topic	**'What a Mess!' (ACARA 2010)**						
Agents (characters and objects) Who is represented? *Agency* Who does what in the image?	an individual	a few individuals	a small group	small groups	a large group	large groups	a population
	Non-representational *Participants not seen but present*			Representational *Participants present*			
How are the characters represented? - - - ►							
	High stereotype			*Low stereotype*		*Individualistic*	
Processes Vectors representing actions	Action Transactional		Action Non-transactional		Reactional		
	Active	*Passive*	*Active*	*Passive*	*Transactional*	*Non-transactional*	
Processes (agency / actions) What gets done? What does the action result in? *A variety of different processes are enacted*	Actions with consequence					Actions without consequence	
	Material	Behavioural	Mental	Verbal	Relational	Existential	
					Connections between all participants through vectors		
Abstraction / realness / familiarity - - - ►	REAL / GIVEN familiar / everyday		some underlying values and topic		symbolic	IDEAL / NEW deeply abstract	
		Locative circumstances suggest a real environment					

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Colour* ** In both foreground and background*	**'What a Mess!' (ACARA 2010)** *continued*						
Colour: Brightness (Linked with illumination) - - - ►	play of light / absence of shadow (pessimism, deception, lies)		Absence of light	dark and light	obvious light source	Extreme brightness (optimism, honesty, truth)	
Colour Features: Illumination (Glow or reflectiveness - - - ►	no light or shade (only lines used to show contours)		shading rather than shadows		Reflective	illumination and shadows (naturalism and play of light)	
	Some cartoon type representations						
Colour: Shade - - - ►	flat / generic / unmodulated (simplified or fantasy world)					different shade/ fine nuances of a given colour (complex, natural, realistic world)	
Colour: Depth - - - ►	no depth or perspective no overlapping		minimal depth or perspective simple overlapping			Deep perspective complex overlapping / multiple viewpoints	
Colour: Hue - - - ►	cool colours (blues / greens) (cold, calm, distance)					warm colours(reds / oranges) (warmth, energy, vibrancy)	
Colour: Tone - - - ►	two shades of tonal graduation (black+ white or one colour + two tones of that colour)					Maximum tonal graduation (multiple tones of colour)	
Colour: Transparency, modulation and saturation - - - ►	transparency		mid range transparency			opaque	
Colour: Harmony and contrast - - - ►	complementary colours harmonize		a range of complementary and contrasting colours			contrasting colours	

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Perspective and atmosphere* *Setting: Foreground and background*	**'What a Mess!' (ACARA 2010)** *continued*					
Perspective and atmosphere Depth – – – ►	flat and frontal perspective		some participants show 3D dimensions			deep 3D perspective
Perspective: Lines, edges and textures – – – ►	simplest line drawing / cartoons Minimal detail and texture		highly defined participants			Sharp, finely grained / photographs textured and realistic
Perspective: Angles + Social Distance – – – ►	close up Intimacy		Mid range			Distant Anonymity
Perspective: Angle of interaction Power relations – – – ►	looking down at the participant (vertical)		Looking at / across (horizontal)		Looking up at the participant in the frame(vertical)	
	Viewer has power over the participant		Equality		Participant has power over the viewer	
Perspective: View	worm's eye view	bird's eye view	fish eye view	internal eye	frontal view	side view
Perspective: Orientation	back-to-back	back-to-front	face-to-face	side by side	face to viewer	back to viewer
Salience – – – ►	no dominant image		dominance with some images			focus on one feature
The Setting: *Foreground and background* Articulation in background – – – ►	contextualized / detailed background blurring of background (natural)		sharp lines indicating more artificial environment		decontextualised / no articulation in background irregular patterns / unmodulated	
Articulation in foreground – – – ►	no connection with location and setting		strong connection with location and setting			'hyper-real'
	varies					***Spilt milk***

INTERACTIONAL MEANING *Contact and feelings*	**'What a Mess!' (ACARA 2010)** *continued*					
Ambience / Atmosphere / Emotional pull - - - ►	Positive judgment and overall feeling about the image			Neutral	Negative judgment and overall feeling about the image	
						Characters in dream -
Contact: Focalisation *Vectors:* Social relations enacted through the gaze a) Between characters *Various interpersonal connections throughout*	No gaze or involvement (observe)	Side-on looking out of frame (offer)	Provide information (offer)	Side-on looking / Glimpse / inviting (low demand)	Direct gaze-confrontational / Close contact (high demand)	
	Main character looking up but non transactional					
b) Between character/s and sign-reader *Various interpersonal connections between characters and sign-reader throughout*	No direct gaze = no involvement *Sign-reader is placed as an observer.*	Unmediated	Mediated + inferred	Mediated along with *the character Sign-reader looking over the character's shoulder.*	Mediated as if character *Sign-reader is placed as character on angle.*	Direct gaze *Character is looking directly at sign-reader.*
				Torn photo		***One character has direct gaze with sign-reader***

COMPOSITIONAL MEANING	**'What a Mess!' (ACARA 2010)** *continued*					
Dominance of and interaction between semiotic resources	Image is central		Image and text co-exist			Text central
	image dominant	polarizes: centre acts as a mediator	balances	symmetrical	interwoven	verbiage dominant
Placement of verbiage and image in the text	Adjacent *Horizontal plane*		*Vertical plane*		Interrupted *Interpolating*	
	verbiage on left image on right	image on left verbiage on right	image above verbiage below	verbiage above image below	image-verbiage-image	verbiage-image-verbiage
				Verbiage in centre surrounded by image		
Position in the horizontal frame *This compositional design cannot be applied for this NAPLAN design*	left margin immorality, sacred		centre			right margin goodness, everyday
Position in the vertical frame *This compositional design cannot be applied for this NAPLAN design*	top margin (high in the frame) high power, positive mood, high class, idealist, sacred				bottom margin (low in the frame) low power, low class, grounded, realistic	
Image Hotspots	1/3 rule	diagonal axial	single centered	triptych centered	random scattering	vertical / horizontal mirroring
						balanced
	dividing and matching	dividing and facing	serialized			
Frame Size ---►	small spaces / varied placements		space between image and frame balanced			large spaces
Frame Integration *Various framing choices throughout suggesting separations and connections*	Separates: The physical frame creat a difference	Separates: Separated by spaces within the frame	Integrates / Connects: resources occupy the same space white or colour	Overlaps: Elements 'bleed' into other images' spaces	Mediates: Create links between the elements	Contrasts: Indicate differences between elements
Framing Choices: Margins *Various framing choices throughout suggesting separations and connections*	Bounded by a Margin				Unbounded: no Margin	
	re-focalized white / ambient coloured	contained all within / breached breaks	surrounded all around / limited partial	contextualized individuated/ fills page	localised iconic /minimal	decontextualised no setting

Visual category as listed in the recontextualised educational scaffold	Student one	Student two	Student three	Student four
FRAMING AND LAYOUT				
Position	✓	✓	✓	✓
Distance	✓	✓		
Spaces				
Angle	✓	✓	✓	✓
Placement / View		✓	✓	
BACKGROUND				
Shapes	✓	✓	✓	
Textures	✓	✓		✓
Patterns	✓	✓		
Colours	✓	✓	✓	
Depth			✓	
FOREGROUND				
Shapes	✓	✓		
Textures				
Patterns				
Colours	✓			
Depth				
COLOUR				
Brightness				✓
Luminous				✓
Hue – warm and cold			✓	
Shades	✓	✓	✓	
Range of colour	✓	✓	✓	
Contrasts	✓✓	✓		✓
Saturation				
Feelings	✓	✓	✓	✓
Solid/transparent		✓		
AGENTS AND OBJECTS				
Who				
What				
When				
ACTION				
Doing				
Thinking			✓	✓
Sensing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Existing				
Saying				
REAL / IDEAL				
Detail	✓	✓	✓	
Realness				
Make believe				
Feelings	✓	✓		
Beliefs		✓		
Mood	✓		✓	✓

APPENDIX C: Collation of students' visual category preferences

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