**Commonwealth of Australia**

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# **Repetition to help with the understanding of culturally-specific languages, Dr David Rowland**

[Start transcript]

**[David Rowland]**

If you’ve ever read, you know, the legal documents in the old fashioned style before they sort of started making plain English versions, they seem to say the same thing three times, you know, in three different words or three different phrases. And you think, why this amount of repetition? And apparently it was because, when it was getting developed, in England, at that time, because there were so many different cultures in England—you know, they’d been invaded so several times—people didn’t have a common language. So to make sure that everybody, or at least a lot of people, could understand what the meaning of the legal document was, you said it three different ways, so that hopefully at least one of those ways makes sense to somebody. So this is something to be aware of, is that, yes, these metaphors and sayings are very useful ways of talking, but you may need to explain them to make sure that people from different cultures understand. If you have mature-age students in your class, coming back to study after being away for 20 or 30 years, they haven't been exposed to that academic language, so even things like saying: 'You need to have a thesis statement, you're making assumptions that people actually know what you're talking about'. And lecturers might say: 'Well look, didn't they teach you that at school?' Well, they may or may not have, but if it was 20 years ago that you were at school, even if they did, you might have forgotten or it’s a bit hazy.

[End transcript]