**Anna Stewart** - Hi, I'm Anna Stewart, and this webinar today is on the Linguistic Theory in the English Language study design. The aim of this webinar is to inform you of the specific linguistic theories that our students need to know and to provide you with some ways that you might be able to teach them in the classroom. Now, the entire English language course is grounded in a descriptivist approach to English. As budding linguists, our students are encouraged to observe language and comment on these observations without judgement. The way they do this is by using metalanguage. Each metalanguage they use makes an assumption of an underpinning linguistic theory. However, we also teach some specific theories about which they need to show an understanding. Of course, there are many, many linguistic theories often covering the same content. And this study design has carefully sifted through these theories and chosen those that provide an accessible entry point into the field of linguistics.

So, these are the key theories and when they best fit across the study. So, Unit 1 Outcome 1 covers the signifier and signified by Ferdinand de Saussure, as well as Jakobson's functions of Roman Jakobson. Unit 1 Outcome 2 is the language acquisition theories first and second. It covers Universal Grammar by Noam Chomsky, Usage-Based Theory of Michael Tomasello, and the Critical Age Hypothesis, which is not a theory, but it's an interesting study. Now, Unit 2 Outcome 2 covers Language Reclamation by Barry Blake. And Unit 3 Outcome 1 covers Brown and Levison's Politeness Theory.

So, for the rest of this webinar, I'm going to go through these theories in the order that they're presented here. So here we are at Unit 1 Outcome 1 and the two theories taught here are Ferdinand de Saussure's signifier and signified, as well as Jakobson's functions. Now, while there is no need for students to know his name or memorise his name, much of this outcome is embedded in the work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, often attributed as the father of linguistics. It was he who suggested the representation of language in its subsystems. He also classed language in all its modes as a system of signs, and this is where his theory of signifier and signified becomes important. Ferdinand de Saussure stated that language was a system of signs. Each sign is made of two parts.

The signifier, that is the physical form, whether it be written in words, drawn as a picture, signed using our hands or spoken, and the signified, that is the mental concept that these words, pictures, or sounds represent. In this example, the word or the picture of a tree is the signifier. And our shared understanding of a real tree is the signified. Now, unless there is a shared understanding of the signifier to the signified, then the sign carries no meaning, which is the arbitrary nature of language. It relies on the shared understanding for the sign to carry meaning. De Saussure further suggested that there needed to be an underlying system of well-defined codes for any language to have meaning.

He himself taught this concept to his pupils using a game of chess. And I also do the same. Well, in my class, I hold up a rook. Now, I'm aware that this is actually a picture of a bishop, but I don't hold up a bishop, I hold up a rook, and I ask my students to walk to one side of the class if they know what this particular chess piece is called and how it moves and to go to the other side of the class if they don't. Now, from here, we can understand that the code that drives meaning of this sign is the rules of chess. We then extrapolate that very simple example and begin to bring in other signs. Discussion might emerge here when you look at these signs about whether people of different nationalities, cultures, interests, ages share the same understanding of different signs.

A fun activity in the class is to ask students to find any sign at all, a form of language, a word, or a picture, and break down the sign into its signifier, its signified, and what code is required for that to be understood. They might like to make a poster to put up in the room. I like to do this 'cause it's right near the beginning of the year and it sort of begins to pepper the room with some linguistic features or linguistic things that the students themselves have done and the students like to look around and look at other people's ideas and work. It's a bit of fun.

Okay, so from here we go to Jakobson's functions and Jakobson's functions build on the work of de Saussure. He recognised, like my students often do in the conversation about signifier and signified, that sometimes other things impact the message like context and relationships between the interlocutors. Jakobson's functions were designed for the spoken mode, but they are now also used, or we certainly also use them for this course in the written mode too. And it's a really good play when it comes to internet-based language. And, of course, because that weaves kind of between the two, which is lovely. So Jakobson's functions broken down. Here they are. There's the emotive function, which is driven by the speaker or writer to express their thoughts. The needs of the recipient or the addressee are not considered in this function.

So, swearing, expressions of exclamations, and things like that, they come into the emotive function. And opposite to that in the sense that it's not about the addresser, but now about the addressee is the conative function. The addressee is at the heart of the intention behind this text, so imperative structures, persuasion, prayers, requests, all of these things are part of the conative function. Now, between the addresser and the addressee are functions that impact the message. The referential function is an expression of context conveying information in a denotative or cognitive way. And this includes giving information. The poetic function focuses on the message itself and incorporates play or pleasure in language, so lots of language structures and plays and all that kind of stuff comes in here.

The phatic function focuses on the message channel. Is this message prolonging the interaction? Is it cutting off the interaction? Is it instigating an opening of the channel? It's making connections. All of this is phatic. And the final one is metalingual, and it pays attention to the code. It ensures understanding. It comes out of linguistics and ensures that everyone is understanding what people are talking about. Do you see what I mean? Do you follow what I'm saying? Or even a description about the code itself and what's going on behind that underlying code so that everyone's got this shared notion of what's going on there.

Okay, so when we teach Jakobson's functions, our students need to realise that it's not just one function involved in any text. A great way to do this is to look at really, really simple texts, simple advertisements, they're often very conative to start. Ask them to find different functions more than one and then justify their choice with specific linguistic examples. Our job here is to be able to label those examples with linguistic metalanguage. The students won't be able to do that yet, but for them to be able to see a link between what they can see ahead of them and then some metalanguage that they can apply to it, it gives them that steppingstone into the linguistic approach to the subject.

So, students can very quickly see how language features can link to function in this way. So, if we look at this text here, hairdresser wanted, you might observe things like the conative function in the noun phrase family member because it makes the workplace enticing. It wants people to apply for this position. It has a referential function. You must be competent in haircuts. It provides information about what the requirement is for this position. Also, the formatting of hairdresser wanted, it draws people in. You might suggest that the email provided there actually prolongs the connection or it prolongs that channel as well.

So, you could look at these things and think, "Well, what roles, what functional roles are all these things playing?" Now, this image shows how Jakobson's functions do build de Saussure's work. The signifier is chosen by the addresser and the signified is fleshed out by these other language functions. I like to teach these two theories in succession after I teach the morphology, lexicology, and syntax required in this Outcome, show that the students have the language to articulate their observations as much as possible and I can help them along the way. Okay, onto Unit 1 Outcome 2. And this is where we're exploring theories around language acquisition, both first language acquisition and second language acquisition. Now, at the heart of all child language acquisition theories is the question of nature or nurture. Many linguists have had their input in this debate, including Skinner, Pinker, Piaget, Bruner.

However, this study design has selected two opposing theories for their contribution to the debate and these are Noam Chomsky's Universal Grammar and Michael Tomesello's Usage-Based Theories. These two theories theoretically can't occur at the same time. So Universal Grammar, it introduces the idea of innateness the nature side of the debate. The theory suggests that every child is born with a language acquisition device that has the capacity to take on any grammar.

I was talking with Natalie Gleeson who likened this LAD to a kind of computer chip implanted in a child's brain which I think is a really fun image. As children are exposed to their native language, they begin to whittle down all the possible grammar rules that's relevant to them until they match those of their mother tongue and the rest just go away. Now, there is support for Universal Grammar.

So, all children go through very similar stages of language acquisition, and children do more than simply imitate adult speech. Things like over and under extension suggest that children are actively constructing language according to an unconscious model of how language works. Children resist or simply do not respond to correction from adults. And medical research suggests that there are specific areas in the brain to control language and all of these things support this nature argument of Universal Grammar. However, there are some problems with the theory and most of these problems come from the fact that Chomsky never backed his theory with any practical experiments and never explored in detail the implications of interaction and how that affected language acquisition. Now, some other linguists have come in and done some experiments and furthered the theory and the hypotheses, but Chomsky never did that himself.

So, on the other hand is Usage-Based Theory and it's a psycholinguistic theory that states that children only acquire language through language use. Tomasello's theory can only be true if Chomsky's theory is not. Now, Usage-Based Theory suggests that it is not language that all children have in common, but rather it is the cognitive skills including intention reading and pattern spotting that enable the children to learn the language in a similar way. So, Usage-Based Theory relies on the notion that language is used for communication and that language learning begins long before a child's first words are spoken. There are reasons to support these theories.

So, observing children under two building abstract argument structure around the initial verb. Children also only ever use the verb in the way that it has been exposed to them. So, they get the verb, and they begin to build around that according Tomasello. Now, over-generalization is rare in children under the age of three, suggesting that they have not yet formed initial language generalisations until that point in time and the input frequency impacts on child language productivity. So, these are reasons to support the Usage-Based Theory, but, of course, on the other hand, there are problems, all of which Tomasello has directly addressed in some way.

So, Usage-Based Theory does not account for a child's formulation of complex constructions, but Tomasello suggests that all complex structures are actually a patterning of simple structures. Usage-Based Theory cannot specify how generalisation is contained. And the response to this is multiple exposure and it helps children confine their language choices. So, children are making boundaries around the exposure, they're forming the rules in that way.

And, of course, it doesn't deal with the poverty of stimulus in the sense that if children aren't getting a lot of stimulus, then they're still developing that language to an extent, but Tomasello says that there is no poverty of stimulus as long as there is communication with the child. So that's the theory from that perspective. Now, it's really important when we are teaching these that we don't promote one theory over the other. We don't think that one theory is better than the other and show bias in that. And when students do begin to say, "Well, I think that's right or I think that's right," they really need to be encouraged to justify that rather than to just decide on something being right and that's that. It's not our job to say which one is right and which one's wrong. That's not what we are here to do.

Okay, so when we are teaching language acquisition, I have a theoretical and practical approach. So, a class debate or mini debates within the classroom is a great way to thrash out the theory. Let them have at it. Practical field work is also a terrific way of doing this. Now, I think that there is a webinar specifically on that, but it's a great way for students to see language at work and then to consider how those theories apply to what they've noticed and observed and to link the theories in. So that's also ways that you can teach those. All right, so both of these theories have applications in second language acquisition, discussing whether language ability has been whittled down or whether it is something that is developed through exposure. Exploring what impact these theories have on second language acquisition can assure the students' understanding of the theories.

All right, so the Critical Age Hypothesis also has a first language and second language approach. It suggests that there is a limited period in which a child can develop a first language. Now at this stage, there is no agreement amongst linguists to the specific critical age, anywhere between five and six all the way through to 17 and 18. There's no clear distinction of when the critical age is. There is much linguistic debate about whether this Critical Age Hypothesis is also relevant in second language acquisition. A recent study suggested that there may be a Critical Age Hypothesis for learning in a naturalistic way, but this does not account for the ability of older second language learners with good verbal ability to apply other learning mechanisms to compensate for that loss so that they can learn second language equally as well.

So, learning about children who have been raised without exposure to language during the Critical Age Hypothesis is an engaging way to teach students about the Critical Age Hypothesis itself. There are sadly more of these children than we care to admit and many of those stories are available to us on the internet, in documentaries, and so on and so forth. Here's a list of some of them there.

Okay, onto Unit 2 Outcome 2 and there are no specific theories related to Unit 2 Outcome 1, so we're skipping that, and the theory explored in Unit 2 Outcome 2 is that of Language Reclamation. Now, Barry Blake is a pioneer in the field of language reclamation with regards to Australian indigenous languages. A reclaimed language is a language that has been constructed in the absence of native speakers. Now, this has been done through accounts and notes taken on the language whilst there were still native speakers. One of the most significantly successful reclaimed languages is actually that of the Kaurna language in South Australia and that's Robert Avery. It's not Barry Blake. That has actually started getting infused back in the community as well, so it's worth exploring those happy stories.

Okay, so there it is, a reclaimed language is a language that has been constructed in the absence of native speakers. So, the way that they get this language is through previous accounts as documented by the British. And, of course, there are concerns with that and previous accounts as shared by people who identify with the language themselves. All right, so there are challenges in reclaiming languages. There is the interpretation of possibly inaccurate phonological transcription because the original transcription were by our white settlers.

Also, the language needs to be modernised if people want to continue its usage and bring its usage into the modern day that obviously there's going to be a lot of words that are needed now that are not available because they weren't needed then. And the permissions of bringing new words into the language needs to be done sensitively and under the care of those people who identify with the language themselves. And, of course, there's also the challenge with recognising distinctions within language boundaries and movement within language boundaries. So, there are challenges around that.

Now, Barry Blake spent a lot of time reclaiming the Warrnambool language and you can see his work in the paper of the same title to see what he did and how he went about doing that. So, teaching language reclamation, there are a variety of ways that you can bring language reclamation into the classroom. Theoretically, asking students to explore different reclamation projects that exist around Australia. The VACL is the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages. It's a terrific local resource, but, of course, you can extend further afield into Australia and the Kaurna languages South Australia. There are lots of others around. Now, a fun activity that my students love to get their teeth into as well is to put language together themselves from clues. So, if you set up clues or different structures or words and then ask them to create other sentences based on what they observe in the grammar of those first two. It's fun, it's coding. Who doesn't like a bit of that?

All right, Unit 3 Outcome 1. The final theory for this course design I teach in Unit 3 Outcome 1 which is Brown and Levison's Politeness Theory. Here it is here. Now, Brown and Levison's Politeness Theory suggests that people both need to be liked which is the positive face needs, while also desire to protect their personal rights and freedoms or their negative face needs. And when students analyse texts, they need to look out for different strategies to appeal to both positive face needs and negative face needs.

So, there are a number of positive politeness strategies and here they are sort of laid out here. I'll just run through them with a couple of examples. I think you'll get the point. Complimenting, "What a lovely dress." Exaggerating, "Oh, you have the bluest, the bluest eyes ever!" Intensify interest, "Is that so, really?" In group membership, that's how we do it too. Seek agreement, "Don't you think so?" Avoid disagreement, "I can see your point of view," or raise common grounds or jokes. All strategies to attend to the positive face needs of people.

Furthermore, we assert or imply knowledge of someone. "Oh, I'm aware you had something to do with this." Offer and promise future connection. "See you tomorrow. See you later." Be optimistic. "That's great!" Be inclusive. "We can do that together." Ask for reasons. "Why do you think so?" Assume or insert reciprocity. "I agree." So, all of these things are making the person feel validated and valued. And these are all positive politeness strategies. On the other side of things are the negative politeness strategies. They're ones that make people feel as though they have control over their space.

Apologetic language, self-criticism or asking for forgiveness. "It's only a small thing, but here you go." You've got using honorific language. Mr. and Mrs. Doctor. Use terms that lack precision. "Oh, we decided that it could've worked," instead of, "I decided that could've worked or I decided you didn't do this. Oh, we all thought this was good together," and that sort of gives people space and movement within a crowd of people. Indicate concern for another self-image. Suggest ideas without imposing on territory. Use hedges or hints. Use indirect requests of pessimism. All of these things are ways that we can make sure that that person has space.

Modal verbs are here, are very, very big. This could be true 'cause you're using modal verbs in apologetic language. You are also using modal verbs to hedge, same as conditional sentences, but I don't think we specifically teach conditional sentences here. So, but either way, the complex sentence with the if is a great way of providing a space for people and their talking. So, I teach politeness strategies just through the application to text, observing it over and over and over again in text. Once the theory's been taught, it's just about recognising and applying it, and that's how I go about doing that. All right, so they're the main theories that are covered in the course. I hope that's been useful to you.

If you have any questions or comments on the study design, please contact Dr. Annelise Balsamo, the English Curriculum Manager of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, and these are her contact details here.

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