VCE English Language Study Design (2024-2028) implementation

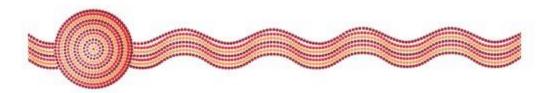Planning for field work

Unit 1, Outcome 2

Acknowledgement of Country

The VCAA respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and pays respect to the ongoing living cultures of First Peoples.

The place of fieldwork

Included as part of the Unit 1 Area of Study 'Language Acquisition' Outcome, linguistic fieldwork is designed for students to understand the different types of linguistic fieldwork, the importance of acquiring consent as well as interpreting data collection.

The aim of fieldwork

The aim of linguistic fieldwork is for students to:

- Develop their understanding relating to the key knowledge and key skills for this outcome

- Apply their knowledge and understanding to real life contexts

- Interact with people that make up a language community

Key Knowledge and Key Skills

From the 2024 Study Design

Key Knowledge:

- Understanding of linguistic fieldwork, including acquiring consent

Key Skills:

- Experience and interpret linguistic fieldwork, including data collection

Models of fieldwork

There are four types of research methods that make up linguistic fieldwork:

1. **Qualitative methods**

   Focuses on naturalistic language use and a small number of speakers. This method involves gathering data by focusing on the behaviour of individuals as they interact and are influenced by context.

2. **Quantitative methods**

   Focuses on studying one or several variables in a range of speakers, this method involves identifying patterns in language use. This method can involve manipulating the treatment of one group over another to compare results in a control group that has not been treated.

3. Mixed-methods

Combines both qualitative and quantitative methods

4. Cross-Sectional Longitudinal

Involves any or all the previously mentioned research methods over a time period

Developing research questions

Students will develop research questions that allow them to find evidence from real life contexts, that supports the key knowledge covered in this outcome.

Please note, students do not need to demonstrate understanding of all key knowledge as they develop their research questions. Rather, teachers should encourage curiosity so that students develop questions that stem from their interests in a particular area of the language acquisition outcome.

Examples of research questions

Some examples of suitable research questions that have been developed from the key knowledge for this outcome:

- **the characteristics and developmental stages for first- and additional-language learners**

- Can I see evidence of a child's developmental stage by observing their language use with a parent or caregiver?

- Can I find evidence of the development of the English Language Subsystems in a child's language use?

Examples of research questions

- **the universal grammar and usage-based accounts theories of language acquisition**

- Is there evidence of a child's language use that supports usage-based accounts theory of language acquisition?

- Can I find evidence of the critical period of language acquisition?

- Can I find evidence of the role and impact that Infant or Child Directed Speech has on a child during an interaction with a parent/caregiver?

Examples of research questions

- **Commonalities and differences between learning a language as a young child and as an adult, including first- and additional-language learning, and multilingualism**
- Can I see evidence of the way children and adults learn additional languages?
- Can I find evidence of a parent promoting multilingualism during interactions with their child?

- **Code switching in language learning**
- Can I find evidence of the different types of code switching in adult speakers learning additional languages?

Selecting participants

- The development of research questions lead students to decide and select appropriate participants for their study.

- Careful consideration must be given to the impact research may have on any participants involved during data collection.

Data collection

- Record the speech of child in their family

- Use an old recording

- Use a recording supplied by their teacher

- Ask a member of the school community for permission to record their child talking or use an old recording

- Locate an online video of a child talking via YouTube

Data Collection

- Interview a parent/caregiver

- Interview an adult learning a second language

- Record conversational speech between students learning an additional language

- Use a transcript from The CHILDES (Child Language Data Exchange System). This is a publicly accessible database and can be accessed at: https://childes.talkbank.org/

- The documentary Genie: Secret of the Wild Child https://topdocumentaryfilms.com/genie-secret-wild-child/

Consideration of ethics

It is essential that all fieldwork is conducted in a respectful, responsible, and culturally sensitive manner. Consequently, acquiring consent is an important consideration for students selecting participants they intend to record and or interview.

This includes:

- Written and signed consent from the participants (something that can be developed as a class with careful guidance from teachers)
- For underaged participants, parental/caregiver permission is required

Consideration of ethics

- All participants shall be fully informed about the purposes of the field work
- They must be informed how data will be stored and used including any archiving on completion of the field work
- Sharing finding (perhaps a copy of a research paper or presentation)
- The right to withdraw from the field work at any time without risk or jeopardy to relationships with the student and or the school

Consideration of ethics

- The Australian Linguistic Society statement of ethics when conducting linguistic research provides important information regarding ethical considerations and is certainly worth reading with students when they specifically consider any impact on participants taking part in linguistic fieldwork.
http://als.asn.au/AboutALS/Policies

Consideration of ethics

- Written consent is not required when collecting of data from creative commons sources or material that has been publicly shared.
- Irrespective of the source, ethical consideration remains an important aspect to this area of study.

Interpreting data

- Once data is collected students can be directed to transcribe sections of what they have recorded.

- As an example, students that gather a recording of participants can be directed to transcribe the recording or transcribe sections of the recording. A transcript of speech allows for the interpretation by analysing evidence to answer research questions.

Interpreting data

- Recording and transcribing the speech of a child and parent conversing for a set period of time, allows students to interpret and analyse the transcript for evidence of a child's language use that supports one or both of the theories of language acquisition.

- Ultimately, an analysis of a transcript of speech will allow students to validate their research questions.

Presenting Research

- There is scope for teachers to design assessment around the ways students present their research. For example, this could be in the form of a research paper or a formal oral presentation

- A multi-modal presentation that includes examples of data, interpretation and analysis of data and a summary of findings, perhaps embedded video of the student discussing the results of their fieldwork.

- Such presentation forms would meet the assessment requirement that teachers must provide opportunity for at least one assessment in an oral or multimodal form.

Final thoughts

- For the purposes of this study, linguistic fieldwork allows students to experience a taste of the fieldwork that occurs in tertiary environments and by other professional researchers.

- Linguistic fieldwork encourages students to investigate areas they find interesting and seek out answers to questions they develop through the course of the language acquisition outcome.

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