

## EDUC 260: Language, literacy and learning

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## WEEK 1

### LECTURE 1.1

#### THINKING ABOUT LANGUAGE

- What is language?
  - o “The quintessence of humanity” – George Steiner, 1964.
- “What is common to every day use of language is that it is meaningful, contextualised, and in the broadest sense, ‘social’.” – Halliday, M.A.K. (1969)
  - o How do we make meaning?
    - Through a variety of means
  - o Contextualised
    - We adapt our language according to the context in which we are operating
    - Help students to understand the different language needs of different contexts
      - E.g. text messages or formal writing
  - o Social
    - How to we set up aspects of our communication
    - Language has a social purpose

#### **Language Modes**

- Integrated and interdependent
- Any combination for responding to and composing texts
  - o The way in which we increase our attention to viewing and representing.
  - o E.g. digital and visual language.
- Skills needed for all modes
  - o What do I need to focus on as a teacher?
- Frame learning outcomes
- Guide our study
  - o Repertoire of practices - we are learning lots of different skills to encourage the learning in our own students.
- The 6 language modes:
  - o Listening
  - o Speaking
  - o Reading

- Writing
- Viewing
- representing

### WHAT IS LITERACY

- Traditions:
  - Reading and print based
    - Family leader had to teach everyone to read and the minister would test people.
      - You couldn't marry unless you could pass that test.
    - Ability to read print letters.
  - The word literacy comes from 'Litteratus' (Latin) – lettered
- Changes over time
  - Complexity, diverse uses
  - We now think about multiliteracies.
  - Literacy has evolved from reading a print letter
    - Lots of different uses of literacy now.
- Literacy is (Luke, Freebody & Land, 2000, p.20):
  - 'The flexible and sustainable mastery of a repertoire of practices with the texts of traditional and new communications technologies via spoken language, print and multimedia'.
  - NB: interacting online is different to reading a book
    - How you navigate online; how you read online, etc.

### CONTEMPORARY DEFINITIONS OF LITERACY

#### **Conceptualising Literacy**

- Active & evolving; dynamic & situated; holistic view
  - It keeps changing.
  - It is so much more than what is examined in NAPLAN
- Foundation of learning
  - If we aren't literate, we are locking students out from learning.
  - Our job as teachers is to empower our students to learn
- The ability to make purposeful meaning from and in spoken, electronic and written texts

- Create & communicate meaning clearly to others through interactions in a range of modes & various mediums in diverse contexts
- Comprehend, interpret, analyse, respond and interact with the growing variety of complex sources of information
- Understand & negotiate the world; informed citizenship & ethical participation in society
  - o Build confidence to read, think and engage.
  - o Literacy helps use to be informed and participate and thus understand the world.

### **Multiliteracies**

- “The term ‘multiliteracies’ is widely used to reflect the multiple nature of literacy and the integration of multiple modes of meaning-making in three spheres of our lives: our personal, work and public lives.” - (Luke, Freebody & Land, 2000, p.2220)
  - o Many literacies.
  - o Integrating those multiple modes.
- 2 aspects:
  - o Linguistic and cultural diversity – global spread
    - There are also many English’s.
  - o Combination of modes and forms

### **The Cool Web (R. Graves)**

- Why is this extract important to the ideas we are exploring in this unit?

## **LECTURE 1.2: A HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND THE ORIGIN OF WORDS**

### WHAT IS LANGUAGE

#### **Words**

- “A word is not a crystal, transparent and unchanged, it is the skin of a living thought and may vary greatly in colour and content according to the circumstances and the time in which it is used.” – Oliver Wendell Holmes
- Context:
  - o Language being used in changing contexts.
  - o How we select our words are according to our purpose, context and audience.

## Language

- Etymology is the study of the history of words, their origins, and how their form and meaning have changed over time
- “Language”:
  - o Latin: lingua
  - o French: langue – ‘tongue’
- Speech basis
  - o Reminds us the history of language has its origins in speaking.
  - o It has an oral history
- Multimedia potentiality
  - o Words are in action now, moving and changing, etc.
- Language:
  - o Is eclectic
  - o Comes from hybrid origins
  - o Draws on a range of resources/ cultures, etc.
  - o Is inventive, creative, unpredictable and endlessly fascinating.

## THEORIES ABOUT THE ORIGINS OF LANGUAGE

- The BOW-WOW Theory
  - o Imitation of animal sounds.
- The DING-DONG Theory
  - o Reactions and sound utterances
    - Oral gestures
  - o E.g. instinctive sounds where people respond to gestures
    - E.g. Ma ma
- The POOH-POOH Theory
  - o Development of natural interjections
    - Development of utterances.
      - E.g. Uhh and Ohh
- The Onomatopoeic Theory
  - o Evolution from sounds of imitative character
  - o Bring together sound and start to articulate.