Linguistic Principles and Theories:

- Children learn language at slightly different rates but there are a number of accepted stages that a child will progress through before becoming a fluent speaker.
- Students will continue to learn the **six language levels: Language Level 1 – Lexis and Semantics; Language Level 2 – Lexis and Semantics; Language Level 3 – Phonetics, Phonology and Prosodics; Language Level 4 – Graphology; Language Level 5 – Pragmatics; Language Level 6 – Discourse**
- Language can be investigated in a huge range of contexts and modes. Most texts will be categorised under **written** or **spoken** modes to an extent; however, numerous texts are **multi-modal**, i.e. they possess features of both writing and speech.

- Children learn language and pass through different stages of development. These are:
    - **Pre-birth**
    - **Pre-verbal**
    - **Holophrastic stage**
    - **Two-word stage**
    - **Telegraphic stage**
    - **Post-telegraphic stage**
- There are many different theories which try to explain how children acquire language but it is important to recognise there is **no single definitive theory to explain how language is acquired**:
    - **B. F. Skinner (1904-90) 'Behaviourism'** – Proposed that children learn language through imitation, i.e. **operant conditioning** and are born as **tabula rasa**, i.e. undeveloped 'fresh brains'. This is the idea that either a positive or a negative response given by a caregiver can influence the way in which a child talks on future occasions.
    - **Chomsky 'Nativism'** – Introduced the **Language Acquisition Device (LAD)** which theorises that the human brain is pre-programmed with the ability to learn language, an ability to work out the systems in terms of grammar and syntax. The **LAD** as proposed by Chomsky supports the notion that humans are born with an **innate language learning capacity**. This theory is in opposition to Skinner's Behaviourism.
    - **Jean Piaget (1896-1980)** – Focused more generally on **cognitive development** and suggested that at the core of a child's development of understanding is the learning that a child undertakes. He suggested that children would not develop until particular stages of cognitive development had been reached.
    - **Jerome Bruner 'Social Interaction'** – Rejected Chomsky's LAD and focused on the importance of a child's interaction with caregivers as the key to language development. He suggested the importance of a **Language Acquisition Support System (LASS)** which refers to the caregivers and other important participants within a child's life. Bruner suggested that **scaffolding** enables children to gradually develop their speech.
    - **Lev Vygotsky 'Scaffolding'** – Suggested the importance of 'doing' for a child to be able to develop and also focused on the importance of the caregiver to act as a **more knowledgeable other**. Through supporting the child from a position of having more knowledge and understanding, the adult (or perhaps older child) can direct the child to move within the **zone of proximal development (ZPD)**. This is the area just beyond what a child is able to do already, so a caregiver might provide the necessary support, or scaffolding, for the child to venture beyond their current level of ability, whether in language use or academically.
    - **Cognitive Linguistic Approach** – Michael Tomasello further rejected Chomsky's theory by outlining a **usage-based** model of language acquisition and development, arguing against language being a special 'instinct'. Instead, the ability to learn language is both primarily social (driven by the human pre-disposition to be cooperative and collaborative), and relies on using the same kinds of cognitive processes as other forms of learning, for example walking, drawing etc.

Linguistic Principles and Theories:

- The specific way in which caregivers talk to children is described as **child directed speech (CDS)**.
- **Play** is an essential aspect of a child's language acquisition as they interact with their surrounding environment, other people and their imagination.
- It is likely that a child begin acquiring knowledge for writing when they are exposed to printed language. There is a strong evidence base to suggest children who are exposed to a rich reading environment in early years become more successful both in their writing and in school generally.
- **Synthetic phonics** teaches children the individual phonemes independently from reading. Once these are embedded, they can blend them together to pronounce a word. The child is synthesising the individual phonemes to place them together into a whole word.
- **Analytical phonics** does not teach the individual phonemes to children before they begin reading but encourages the breaking down of words into key sections. These parts are known as the **onset** and the **rime**. The onset is the beginning of the word which is likely to be one or two letters long.
- It is very difficult for a child to progress in their literacy development if spoken acquisition of language has not progressed. The general cognitive awareness of how language works needs to be in place before writing can develop. A child needs to have a **wide lexical range** and an understanding of how these words work together in terms of grammar and syntax in speech in order to start writing individual words and then progressing to the production of written sentences.
- Language features belong to particular **levels of language** that reflect the fact that it is possible to study discourse, lexis and semantics, pragmatics, grammar, phonetics/phonology/prosodics and graphology as distinct and separate subjects.
- **Language Level 1: Lexis and Semantics** – Lexis is the term that we use in language studies and linguistics to refer to vocabulary. One of the most obvious ways we can do this is by grouping words together on the basis of the particular roles and functions they play both in written and spoken modes of language. These groups are known as **word classes**. **Semantics** is the study of **meaning** in language.
- **Language Level 2: Grammar** – Grammar includes the study of two main elements: **morphology** (the study of word formation) and **syntax** (the study of how words form larger structures such as phrases, clauses and sentences. **Grammar** therefore, is the whole system and structure of the language.
- **Language Level 3: Phonetics, Phonology and Prosodics** – **Phonetics** and **phonology** both refer to areas of language study that focus on sound. **Phonology** is the area of study that refers to the abstract sound system. **Phonetics** is concerned with investigating how sounds are actually produced by language users. **Prosodics** is the study of how speakers can shape meanings through emphasising certain aspects of intonation, speed and volume.
- **Language Level 4: Graphology** – Many texts rely on the use of layout, space, images, colour and different font types to help convey their meaning. Often these can be used in very obvious ways to help support meaning; at other times, their use may be more subtle. In all cases, graphological features tend to combine with other language levels to help support interpretation.
- **Language Level 5: Pragmatics** – **Pragmatics** is the area of language study associated with how contextual factors influence meaning.
- **Language Level 6: Discourse** – **Discourse** is the level of language concerned with larger stretches of text including spoken, written and multi-modal.

- **Communicative competence** – the ability to form accurate and understandable utterances, using the grammar system, and to understand social context for using them
- **Proto words** – 'made up' words that a child will use to represent a word they might not yet be able to pronounce, for example 'ray rays' for 'raisins'
- **Pre-verbal stage** – a period of time that involves experimenting with noises and sounds but without producing recognisable words – usually lasting the majority of the baby's first year
- **Cooing** – distinct from crying but not yet forming recognisable vowels and consonants
- **Babbling** – vocal play that involves forming vowel and consonant sounds, which can be reduplicated or variegated
- **Holophrastic stage** – the point in a child's development when a child uses just individual words to communicate
- **Non-verbal communication** – all the ways in which communication occurs that do not involve words (e.g. a parent shaking their head at a child will communicate the same meaning as 'no')
- **Reduplication** – repeated syllables within a word (e.g., baa baa for blanket)
- **Diminutives** – the reduction in scale of an item through the way this word is created
- **Addition** – adding an addition suffix to the end of a word in order to change the way in which the word is pronounced and interpreted (e.g., Mummy and dolly instead of Mum and doll)
- **Two-word stage** – period of time when a child begins to put two words together (e.g., 'kick ball')
- **Telegraphic stage** – period of time when a child's utterances will be three words and more; there might still be omission of some words, with the key words included
- **Content words** – words within a sentence that are vital to convey meaning
- **Grammatical words** – words within a sentence that are necessary to demonstrate structural accuracy
- **Post-telegraphic stage** – period of time when a child's language will include both content and grammatical words and more closely resemble adult speech
- **Operant conditioning** – the idea that either a positive or a negative response given by a caregiver can influence the way in which a child talks on future occasions
- **Positive reinforcement** – the positive feedback given to a child which is thought to encourage similar performance again
- **Negative reinforcement** – the lack of feedback, correction or negative feedback that might prevent a child from making the same error repeatedly
- **Universal grammar** – term coined by Chomsky – the notion that all human languages possess similar grammatical properties which the brain is 'hard wired' to be able to decode and use
- **Virtuous errors** – grammatical errors that are understandable and logical through an incorrect assumption being made about grammar use
- **Cognitive development** – a child's development of thinking and understanding
- **Scaffolding** – the support provided by caregivers through modelling how speech ought to take place, in order to help the child's language development
- **Egocentric** – thinking only of themselves, without understanding or regard for the feelings of others

- **Object performance** – an understanding that objects continue to exist even when they can't be seen or touched
- **Expansion** – where a caregiver might develop the child's utterance to make it more grammatically complete
- **Recast** – the grammatically incorrect utterance of a child is spoken back to the child but in the corrected form
- **Mitigated imperatives** – an instruction given in such a way that it does not appear to be a command but a more gentle suggestion
- **Overextension** – where a child might use a word more broadly to describe things other than the specific item to which the word actually applies
- **Underextension** – where a child might use a word more narrowly to describe something without recognising the wider use of a word
- **Hyponym** – the more specific words that can be defined within the more generic hypernym
- **Hypernym** – the more generic term that is connected to more specific word choices that are all within the same semantic field
- **MLU (mean length of utterance)** – the average utterance length of speakers calculated by adding up the total number of words spoken and dividing this total by the total number of utterances
- **Grapheme** – the letter or blend of letters that represent a sound (e.g., s or ch)
- **Phoneme** – the sound of a letter or blend of letters within a word
- **Phonic approach** – encourages readers to break down words into individual graphemes and sound them out in order to then read the whole word accurately
- **Look and say approach** – encourages readers to identify familiar words as a whole in order to read them
- **Oracy** – an individual's development of speaking and listening skills
- **Literacy** – an individual's development of reading and writing skills
- **Tripod grip** – the way in which a pen or pencil should be held, using the thumb, forefinger and middle finger
- **Gross motor skills** – the skills associated with larger movements, for example, walking, jumping, climbing, waving
- **Fine motor skills** – the skills associated with more precise movement, for example with the fingers; this might be writing, sewing, playing with Lego or using scissors
- **Directionality** – the process of writing from left to right
- **Cursive script** – also called joined up handwriting, which can improve fluency and form of handwriting
- **Print handwriting** – the initial handwriting that a child will use, writing each individual letter out separately
- **Casual cursive script** – a midpoint between cursive and print handwriting, whereby some letters are joined but others are not
- **Homonyms** – words that are spelt the same but pronounced differently, e.g., bow and bow; the violin player had to mend his bow; the actor took a bow)
- **Homophones** – words that are pronounced the same but have a different meaning and may have different spellings, e.g. there and their
- **Phonetic spelling** – words that are spelt as they sound