This guide signposts towards key theorists whose work may be helpful for students to explore as part of the AS/A Level English Language course. Please note that this guide is not exhaustive or prescriptive and schools may also want to look at theorists and theories not mentioned here.

Glossary

A

Aitchison, Jean
• labelling/packaging/network building – explored lexical acquisition and patterns/relationships (CLA)

B

Baker, Paul
• construction of sexuality and gender through language

Barthes, R
• semiotics, construction of meaning
• relationship between reader and writer; signifier and signified

Beattie, Geoffrey
• significance of interruptions (gender)

Berko, Jean
• Wug test, morphology, (CLA)

Bernstein, Basil
• restricted vs elaborated code; links between language and social class

Brown, Penelope
• pragmatics, face, politeness principle (with Levinson)

Brown, Roger
• syntax, morphology in relation to CLA

Bruner, Jerome
• emphasis on the social environment of children in supporting linguistic development (CLA)

C

Cameron, Deborah
• gender interaction
• challenges difference and deficit models

Cheshire, Jennifer
• non-grammatical forms, peer groups, dialect

Chomsky, Noam
• nativism/inbuilt capacity to develop speech ‘programmed’ into the human brain
• universal grammar (CLA)

Coates, Jennifer
• gender, oral culture, house talk

Coulthard, M
• discourse analysis; classroom discourse
• IRF (Initiation-Response-Follow-up model (with Sinclair)

Crystal, David
• descriptivist/very influential contemporary linguist

D

Drew and Heritage
• occupational dialect; goal orientation; asymmetry; allowable contributions

Dyer, Gillian
• advertising; representation
Eckert, Penelope
- sociolinguistics, language and gender

Fairclough, Norman
- instrumental/influential power
- synthetic personalisation

Fox, Sue
- MLE; historical sociolinguistics

Giles, Howard
- accommodation theory; convergence; divergence

Githens, Susan
- gender styles; computer mediated communication

Goffman, Irving
- linguistic interaction; face

Grice, H P
- conversation theory; ‘cooperative principle’
- conversational maxims

Halliday, Michael
- ideational metafunction; representation
- functions of language; children develop language because it serves specific purposes/functions for them

Holmes, Janet
- occupational dialect; small talk, compliments
- linguistic behaviour
K

Kerswill, Paul
• dialect levelling; language change

Koester, Almut
• importance of phatic talk in occupational dialect

L

Labov, William
• sociolinguistics, phonology, dialect and accent levelling

Lakoff, Robin
• dominance/deficit model (gender)

Leech, Geoffrey
• pragmatics, politeness, stylistics, grammar

Lenneberg, Eric
• proposed the idea of the critical period (up to approximately five years of age) – language acquisition becomes much harder if this has passed. (CLA)

Levinson, Steven
• pragmatics, face, politeness principle (with Brown)

M

Milroy, Lesley
• speech communities; closed and open networks

O

O’Barr, W and Atkins, B
• social status; context; gender; ‘powerless language’
• courtroom discourse
P

Piaget, Jean
- cognitive development and its role in language acquisition
- LASS (Language Acquisition Support System)
- Role of caregivers in fostering language development, eg through providing scaffolding

Pinker, Steven
- language acquisition, focusing particularly on syntax, grammatical structures, semantics

S

Sapir-Whorf
- hypothesis advanced by Edward Sapir, later developed by Benjamin Whorf
- explores impact of a language's structure on perception
- linguistic relativity, determinism

Sebba, Mark
- Identity, bilingualism
- London Jamaican, creoles, pidgins

Sinclair, J
- discourse analysis; classroom discourse
- IRF (Initiation-Response-Follow-up model (with Coulthard)

Skinner, B F
- behaviourism, believed children learned by copying parents’ speech and through positive reinforcement (CLA)

Spender, Dale
- genderlect; dominance; language as embedding and strengthening patriarchal values and structures

Swales, John
- Discourse community; the language of shared goals

T

Tannen, Deborah
- difference model of gendered language
- identifies a range of differences between male and female speech, for example focuses on concepts of status vs support

Tomasello, Michael
- Construction model of language acquisition; usage-based approach

Trudgill, Peter
- research into language, class and gender; saw women's speech as more socially aspirational
- dialect levelling

V

Vygotsky, Lev
- zone of proximal development - difference between the ability to perform tasks with and without guidance (CLA)

W

Wareing, Shân
- types of power; language, society, gender

Z

Zimmerman, Don and West, Candace
- gender; dominance model; interruption
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