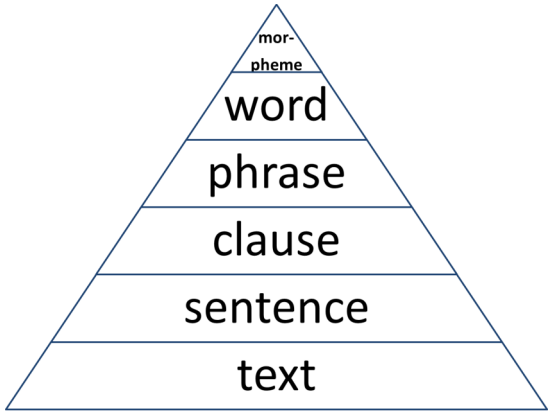
A Level Language Threshold Concepts

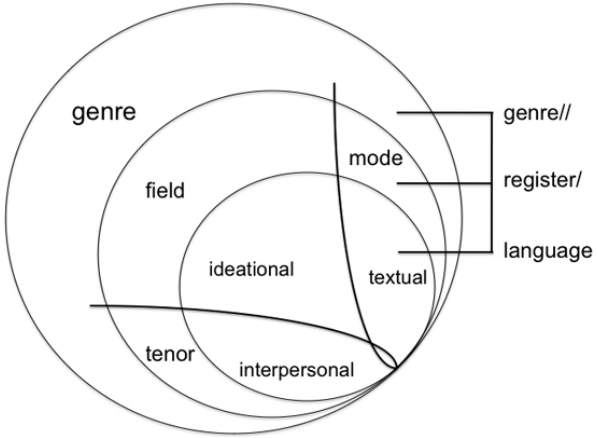
1. Linguistic Rank Scale



2. Form Vs Function

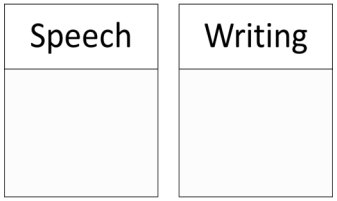
proper noun	verb	proper noun
John	hit	Fred
subject		object
proper noun	verb	proper noun
Fred	hit	John
subject		object

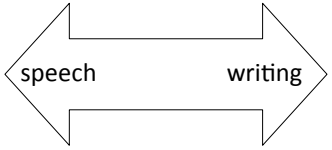
3. Language As A Choice

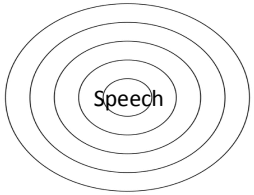


From Martin and Rose 2008: 17

4. Mode







5. Terminology

6. Narrative Behind The Knowledge

1. Linguistic Rank Scale

What?

- A way of showing how language is built up.

Why Is It Important?

- Language is systematic—it is critical you understand the system behind language.
- Larger units of language are built up from smaller ones.

2. Form Vs Function

What?

- Grammatical Form = building blocks and labels that words are given e.g. noun, adjective.
- Grammatical Function = grammatical role that the building blocks perform e.g. subject, object. Grammatical roles are defined by structural relationships.
- Semantic Function = where we invoke meanings. Semantic roles are defined by relationships of meaning.

Why Is It Important?

- Form alone does not tell us everything about how a constituent works in a sentence.

3. Language As A Choice

What?

- 'Texts' are more than just isolated words or utterances.
- 'Texts' are real acts of communication affected by factors related to both the producer and the receiver.

Why Is It Important?

- 'Texts' are the outcome of choices (whether we are conscious of these or not) about how we express and understand meanings.
- 'Texts' cannot be considered in isolation.

4. Mode and Genre

What?

- Mode = the way in which something is communicated—speech or writing.
- Genre = a style or category which shares commonly expected conventions

Why Is It Important?

- 'Texts' often contain elements of spoken and written language which has been determined by the context in which they have been produced / received.
- 'Texts' often share characteristics and it is useful to consider how we make sense of 'texts' because of our understanding of these common expectations.

5. Terminology

What?

- The labels we give to aspects of language.

Why Is It Important?

- It is important that we have a common and shared way to describe language.
- It is important that we can explain and communicate this in a precise and systematic way.

6. Narrative Behind The Knowledge

What?

- Important concepts and theories do not just appear. They are informed and shaped by knowledge and thinking that has gone before.

Why is It Important?

- You cannot critically evaluate or consider something if you are unaware of how past thinking has informed or shaped it.

1. Linguistic Rank Scale

Teaching Ideas

- Encourage students to get into the habit of labelling the different 'layers' - e.g. breaking phrases down into words, words into morphemes and so on.

2. Form Vs Function

Teaching Ideas

- Get students to create form-function diagrams.
- Get students to consider how a text's grammatical and semantic function work together.

3. Language As A Choice

Teaching Ideas

- Each lesson nominate a student to bring in a text of their choice and complete an input/output table.
- Get students to annotate a text by generating questions they want answering. Categorise and refine questions, and then answer them.
- See introductory unit lesson and resources on blog.

4. Mode and Genre

Teaching Ideas

- Give students a 'text' and ask them to apply an oppositional, continuum, and prototypical approach to mode to it. Reflect on any similarities or differences, and why this might be.
- See introductory unit lesson and resources on blog.

5. Terminology

Teaching Ideas

- Use terminology flashcards at the start of every lesson and insist on 100% pass rate.
- Give students sentences to parse.
- Frequent low stakes testing of core terminology—use the language knowledge organiser.

6. Narrative Behind The Knowledge

Teaching Ideas

- Ask students to create a timeline of studies.
- Ask students to take a recent study and track back important concepts, considering how it has been informed by previous work.
- Create a venn diagram of a recent and more historic study.
- Take a 'text' and consider the interpretation of it in light of a number of different studies across a number of decades— why and how does it change?