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Linguistics and TESOL at SUNY Oswego

Jean Ann
SUNY Oswego

Bruce Long Peng
SUNY Oswego



Linguistic Society of America

Advancing the Scientific Study of Language

Taking Linguistics Beyond Linguistics Programs and Departments

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Jean Ann and Long Peng

State University of New York at Oswego

What does linguistics offer?

- When considering linguistics in relation to language teaching, for example, second, foreign and native language teaching, we normally think that knowledge of linguistics - the content - is useful.
- For example:

Teachers said students had barely any language *and* that they talked their heads off.

Sociolinguistics could have helped them make sense of what they saw. (Ann and Peng, 2005).

Our focus today

- This talk focuses on a different aspect of the relation between linguistics and TESOL; that is,
 - the teaching of the writing of linguistic analysis in linguistics courses and how it assists students who are learning both
 - to handle future writing demands in K-12 settings (certification exams, grants, letters)
 - to teach ESOL- especially writing.

More specifically,

- Linguistic problems are regularly assigned in linguistics courses.
- Problems generally ask students to:
 - examine data presented to them in the form of a problem;
 - analyze the data: i.e. identify patterns, express generalizations, develop arguments, construct an analysis;
 - write up the analysis.
- We believe how we teach the writing of linguistic analysis is useful to language teachers.

Writing is arguably the most challenging component of *all* language instruction.

How we teach the writing of linguistic analysis:

- serves as a model of writing instruction for our students' students.
- is just what the Common Core Learning Standards demand.
 - CCLS require that K-12 students engage substantially more with informational texts and academic language. Among other things, academic language is used to:

Continued from previous slide

- introduce and describe both quantitative and qualitative data;
- state and highlight patterns, generalizations and trends in the data;
- present analyses and arguments;
- discuss and explore implications of analyses.

These are all the things that we teach in our linguistics courses.

We teach 4 aspects of writing linguistic analysis:

1. **organization of a linguistic analysis**, i.e., how information is packaged
2. **description of language data**, i.e., how data are introduced & described, how patterns and generalizations are stated & highlighted
3. **presentation of analyses**, i.e. formulation of rules or constraints, determination of rule ordering or constraint ranking, demonstration of analyses via derivations & tableaux, etc.
4. **presentation of linguistic arguments** including consideration of competing analyses

Today, we'll examine description of language data

Students present:

- Data with no text, text with no data;
- Data and text that are disconnected;
- Text that fails to identify key characteristics of data;
- Text that fails to mention specific pieces of data, etc.

To us, this means that students need instruction in:

- what to say before data are presented;
- what to highlight once data are introduced;
- how to divide data into subsets;
- drawing attention to patterns or regularities in the data.

Three goals of teaching writing to language teachers

- strengthen language teachers' understanding of language and linguistics;
- develop language teachers' abilities to write linguistic analyses, and, more broadly, develop their abilities to use academic language to construct informational texts;
- to model to language teachers how academic language, more specifically, academic writing is taught.

One learning activity that teaches the writing of linguistic analysis

- Select one or two students' written analysis of a linguistic problem
- Re-write the student's work with the features you want to draw students' attention
- Use the rewritten analysis as a model, have students read it in class and identify the exemplary features of the rewritten analysis,
- Have students discuss the writing in groups of three or four
- Lead a class discussion of the written analysis, highlighting how the analysis is organized, how data are introduced, how to introduce or discuss derivations, etc.

One way to assess writing as well as content

Each written assignment is graded for both writing,

“which includes spelling, grammar, correct terminology, correct use of structural writing techniques for this class, such as making four sections, example numbering, section numbering, text before and after examples, etc.”

And argumentation

“which means that that you are incorporating, appropriately applying or correctly using ideas you’ve heard about in this class or in other linguistics classes, including analytic notions or synthesis of material.”

References

Ann, Jean and Long Peng. 2005. The Relevance of Linguistic Analysis to the Role of Teachers as Decision Makers. In *Language in the Schools: Integrating Linguistic Knowledge into K-12 Teaching*. Kristin Denham and Anne Lobeck (eds.), 71-86. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: New Jersey.



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THANK YOU!