26   Applied Linguistics

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What does a lawyer advise a client about the likelihood of success of a trademark infringement suit involving a similar sounding product name or slogan? What treatment is most appropriate for a child with a speech impairment? How should reading be taught to children, and what is the place of literature in the elementary school curriculum? What is the best way for a simultaneous interpreter to convey the joke made by a politician so that those who do not speak the same language can understand the humor? Should English be declared the official language of the United States? These are all questions for which an applied linguist might be consulted to offer problem-solving expertise that bridges the gap between theoretical linguistics and practical problems of language use in everyday life. The remaining chapters of this book illustrate in greater detail the multivariate field of applied linguistics.

Throughout its history, applied linguistics has stood at the interface between theory and practice, an uneasy position in which the applied linguist must decide whether s/he merely translates theory into practice or utilizes practice to build theory, and this uneasy position is illustrated here with reference to second language teaching. In fact, applied linguistics initially meant primarily solving the problem of second language teaching and only over time did applied linguists become involved in a plethora of other activities. The recent range of inquiry of applied linguistics covers more than can be described in a short overview chapter such as this one or even a series of chapters such as those in the remainder of the book; some of the areas briefly described here but not covered by specific chapters include second language teaching and cross-cultural linguistics, how discourse analysis has been applied to the description and solution of problems in language used in real contexts, and how a multidisciplinary approach to language use can aid efforts at language maintenance for minority or endangered languages and dialects.

1   History

The term applied linguistics dates back at least to the 1940s in the USA when linguists applied analytical methods to the practical problems of producing grammars and phrasebooks and developing language courses for the military especially in languages of the Pacific that were little known in the west. As a result of this history, the term applied linguistics first became associated with language teaching. In the 1940s, the University of Michigan established a program in applied linguistics for training language teachers and began publication of the journal *Language Learning: A Quarterly Journal of Applied Linguistics*, whose title and subtitle illustrate clearly the identification of applied linguistics with the teaching and learning of second and foreign languages. The 1950s saw the establishment of the University of Edinburgh's School of Applied Linguistics, which trained language teachers in applying the principles of linguistics to the practice of pedagogy. On the other side of the Atlantic, the Center for Applied Linguistics was founded in Washington, DC, with the goals of improving English language teaching, promoting the teaching of uncommonly taught languages, and conducting research into educational processes related to language use. In the next two decades, professional organizations devoted to applied linguistics were formed, such as the International Association of Applied Linguists (AILA) in 1973, and the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL) in 1977. The establishment of journals devoted to applied linguistics, namely *Applied Linguistics* in 1980 and *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* in 1981, put the field on a research footing, and articles published in these journals indicate that applied linguistics by the 1980s had moved into areas of inquiry beyond language teaching.

2   What Is Applied Linguistics?

As of 1980, broad agreement was achieved among the major practitioners in the field that applied linguistics: (1) was interdisciplinary, drawing on a multitude of disciplines including psychology, sociology, and pedagogy as well as theoretical linguistics; (2) was not limited to language teaching but included a broad range of fields including lexicography, stylistics, speech pathology, translation, language policy, and planning among others; (3) performed a mediating function between theory and practice (Buckingham and Eskey 1980: 2–3). To these three characteristics, we should add that applied linguistics is "problem-based" (Corder 1973: 10) and brings linguistic insight and analysis to bear on practical issues of language use "situated in time, place, society, and culture" (Sridhar 1993: 7). Unlike some branches of theoretical linguistics which are concerned with language as an abstract object, applied linguistics must take into consideration not only the nature of language but the nature of the particular

world in which language is used, the beliefs, social institutions, and culture of its users, and how these influence language use.

Ideally, the job of an applied linguist is to diagnose a problem in real-world language use, bring the insights of linguistics to bear on the problem, and suggest solutions. An applied linguist, for example, might be called upon to recommend clinical treatment of a language impairment, design an educational program for immigrant children, or advise a school district on language policy. Because the questions addressed by applied linguistics deal with language use in the full richness of its context, applied linguists work closely with professionals in other disciplines such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, and education. An applied linguist who is a teacher trainer, for example, must draw not only on the field of linguistics, but also on the fields of education and psychology. An applied linguist working on language problems associated with immigrant and refugee concerns must perforce be familiar with social and political factors that will influence language use. Similarly, applied linguists working in institutional settings such as health care or law need working knowledge of the terminology, traditions, and practices of those institutions.

However, although applied linguistics is "problem-based," much work in applied linguistics has not reached a stage where specific solutions to problems can be suggested in particular settings. Rather, much research is conducted at the first stage, namely, accurately describing the use of language in particular settings or by particular participants. The goal of such research is to provide "the best possible explanations" which will highlight unexplained problems and lead to further questions that can in turn improve explanation, for this is the base for viable solutions to practical problems of language use in the real world (Brumfit 1997: 87).

Papers and colloquia at AAAL conferences in recent years illustrate the wide net cast by applied linguistics; the field now includes work in the general areas of cross-cultural pragmatics, psycholinguistics, language acquisition and socialization, language for specific purposes, literacy, language policy and planning, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, rhetoric and stylistics, and translation and interpretation. These areas are in addition to the more traditional areas of concern: second language pedagogy, assessment, second language acquisition, bilingualism, and bilingual education. In other words, the questions that applied linguistics seeks to answer range over a multitude of disciplines and real-world settings.

3   Relation of Theory and Practice: the Case of Language Teaching

The applied linguist stands at the intersection of theory and practice, but it is not always clear how the applied linguist mediates between the two. Does theory lead to practice, or practice lead to theory, or is there a symbiotic

relationship in which both theory and practice interact? S. Pit Corder (1973: 10) stated explicitly that applied linguistics "makes use of the findings of theoretical studies. The applied linguist is a consumer, or user, not a producer, of theories." This suggests a one-way street in which theory is at the starting point, and the applied linguist directs traffic from theory to practice. What does this mean in practice? Taking the traditional field of second language teaching as an illustrative example of this model, historically a particular theory of the nature of language and the nature of second language acquisition (see chapter 20, Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition) has formed the basis upon which applied linguists constructed language teaching curricula and recommended appropriate teaching techniques.

The audio-lingual method of language teaching in the 1940s to 1960s is a case in point. Influenced by structuralism in linguistics (see chapter 5, Historical Linguistics) and by behaviorism in psychology, applied linguists believed that language was a collection of discrete learnable structures, speaking was primary, and learning a language was a matter of correct habit formation. This theory was applied in the classroom by structuring language to be taught into carefully controlled increments with severely limited vocabulary to avoid the possibility of learner-produced errors. The presentation of skills was strictly prescribed, with listening first, followed by carefully controlled speaking practice (with no recourse to written forms), only much later followed by reading and writing. To inculcate correct habits, teachers drilled students incessantly in correct pronunciation and patterned practice of grammatical structures.

With new theories of the nature of language and the nature of language learning, we have moved beyond audiolingualism in language teaching; however, theoretical stance on the nature of language learning can still determine how errors are treated, for example, and the place of comprehension and production. Because the theory on which audiolingualism was based held that the nature of language learning is essentially habit formation, errors were avoided because they reinforced incorrect habits. Under the influence of the theoretical work of Noam Chomsky (see chapter 5, Historical Linguistics), applied linguists began to look at second language learners' errors in a new light. They saw language learning as a cognitive process of hypothesis testing, in which errors indicated the stage of the language learner's interlanguage (e.g. Corder 1967).

In terms of the emphasis placed on student production or comprehension, a theoretical stance that presumes second language acquisition mirrors first language acquisition will order the skills to reflect the order of first language acquisition (as in the natural approach [Krashen and Terrell 1988]). Students will be expected to undergo a silent period of listening to comprehensible input first, before they are required to speak. With such a theoretical underpinning, speaking follows listening; reading may be used with literate adult students after they have acquired basic speaking skills, and only later – if at all – will students be expected to begin writing. In contrast, if second language acquisition is held to be different from first language acquisition and if production is seen as critical to second language acquisition, then speaking and

writing will be introduced from day one. In the most extreme applications of a production-based theory of second language acquisition, the teacher is virtually silent so that students become responsible for production of language. Even in less extreme examples, trainee teachers are advised to maximize student talking time and minimize teacher talking time.

A new theoretical model of the nature of language and language learning has given rise to the communicative method, which became the mainstream approach to language teaching in the last decades of the twentieth century. The theory of language underlying this teaching style focusses on the essential nature of language as communication (Brumfit and Johnson 1979). According to the theory, knowledge of a language is far more than knowledge of the grammar of individual sentences. Instead, knowing a language means knowing how to communicate in the language; it involves acquiring "communicative competence." When combined with speech act theory, the emphasis on communicative competence found application in the functional approach of the 1970s and 1980s in Europe. In this approach, communication was boiled down to discrete, teachable speech acts, and the syllabus was constructed around communicative functions such as requesting, asking permission, giving opinions, complaining, etc. Although the communicative approach has developed and expanded since the heyday of the functional method, the aim of learning a second language is still seen as being able to communicate in the language. The implications for syllabus design and teaching techniques are wide-ranging and have had a wide variety of applications. Instead of being presented with spoken texts created for the second language classroom and carefully controlled in structure and vocabulary (as was the case with audiolingualism), students hear or read authentic texts by native speakers for native speakers. However, because native speaker-like pronunciation and absolute grammatical accuracy are unnecessary for efficient communication, gone are the pronunciation and grammar drills of the audiolingual method. The theory posits that language is learned through communication and a negotiation of meaning between interlocutors; therefore, the syllabus is organized to elicit student production of language for communicative purposes. Classroom activities may involve role-plays of situations that students might find themselves in, discussion of topics that students want to communicate about, or completion of tasks requiring students to share information and negotiate meaning.

The discussion of audiolingualism, treatment of error, comprehension-based or production-based approaches, and the communicative approach presupposes that theory is the starting point which is applied by the linguist to the problem of language teaching and put into practice by the classroom teacher. The problem, though, with this one-way street view is that the applied linguist directs traffic from theory to practice without taking account of whether the traffic actually arrives at the desired destination. In language teaching, this was certainly the case with contrastive analysis, which proposed that a careful comparison of similarities and differences between native language and target language would make predictions about what students would find difficult and

easy to learn, with concomitant consequences for syllabus content and order. The problem was that the predictions made by the theory were not borne out in practice (see chapter 20, Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition). When the application of theory does not actually work in practice, the credibility of the applied linguist as mediator between theory and practice is undermined. Indeed, in the field of language pedagogy, many practicing teachers view new theoretical revelations with some degree of skepticism. As Crystal (1981: 20) noted, "the proof of the pudding is in the eating. If the aim of applied linguistics is to help solve a problem, then it must do just that – and moreover be judged by the pudding-eaters to have done so."

A richer model of the relationship among theory, practice, and applied linguistics sees it as a two-way street in which the applied linguist directs traffic from theory into practice and from practice into theory. In this view, "practical problems in which language is implicated are referred to theoretical ideas and, reciprocally, theoretical ideas are made relevant to the clarification of these problems" (Widdowson 1998: 138). The role of the applied linguist in this endeavor has been compared to that of an engineer who acts as an intermediary between the academic physicist and workers on site. As the engineer translates theory into practical applications of what can be done and how the work can be accomplished, so too does the applied linguist. However, this is not the end of the story since the engineer receives feedback from site workers about how well theory works in practice and can convey this information back to the academic (Bell 1981). Similarly in applied linguistics, practice provides a testing ground for theory, but it is more than that: real-world language use provides new questions and issues requiring new theories (Shuy 1987). Rather than practice being subservient to theory, "empirical research, theory-building, and practice go hand-in-hand" (Cumming 1998: 457). In fact, in the realm of language teaching, recent publications in second language pedagogy indicate a greater interest in the particular experiences of language teachers as reflective practitioners whose expertise in their field is of equal value to the expertise of the theoreticians; it is the job of the applied linguist to attend to both and to present not only the generalizability of research findings of theoreticians but also the "particularizability" of research findings for teachers (Clarke 1994). More generally, some have suggested that the very focus of applied linguistics on performance, on language variation in use, and on social context provides the base for its own theory to complement the more traditional emphasis on competence and context-free cognition in theoretical linguistics (e.g. Sridhar 1993).

4   Recent Range of Inquiry

In recent years, applied linguistics has been responsive to new developments in theory, in technology, and in the world in which language is used. Nevertheless, the central characteristics of applied linguistics remain: (1) focus on

contextualized language use; (2) application of theory to practice and vice versa; (3) practical problem-based approach; (4) multidisciplinary perspective. Some of the areas to which applied linguists have turned their attention in recent years include second language teaching and cross-cultural linguistics, language use in specific contexts, and the maintenance of endangered languages and dialects.

4.1   Second language teaching and cross-cultural linguistics

In the field of second language pedagogy, new theoretical developments and changing circumstances in which language teaching takes place have led to new foci of research and directions of practice. Illustrative of these developments (but by no means an exhaustive overview of them) are reconsiderations of the place of grammar and lexicon respectively in the language teaching curriculum and new applications of the communicative and social uses of language.

Drawing on theory and research in psychology, applied linguists have revisited the explicit teaching of grammar in second language classrooms by investigating the facilitative role that noticing and conscious awareness play in enabling learners to acquire grammatical forms in a second language (Schmidt 1990). This research, known as Focus on Form (or FonF for short), has been applied to questions of how and when grammatical instruction can be implemented for most effective learning (e.g. Doughty and Williams 1998).

A different approach, initially associated with work in Great Britain, places lexicon at the center of second language learning and has explored ways and means of applying research to language teaching (e.g., McCarthy 1984). New technology has made possible the collection and analysis of large corpora of written and spoken language. Corpus-based applied linguistics (see chapter 25, Computational Linguistics) uses the corpora as resources of actual language use from which to write dictionaries for nonnative speakers, to revise understanding and teaching of English grammar, to design second language teaching curricula, to write materials, and to suggest teaching techniques (Biber et al. 1998, Lewis 1993).

The emphasis in applied linguistics on language in context has converged with the social fact of large numbers of nonnative speakers of English as students in North American schools and universities; as a result, an important trend in recent years in the USA and Canada is content-based instruction in which language lessons derive from academic course content (Brinton et al. 1989, Snow 1998).

Accurate description of language use with the ultimate goal of teaching has motivated research in cross-cultural discourse and pragmatics. Concentration on spoken language, combined with speech act theory among others, has engendered numerous research projects in applied linguistics investigating

specific speech acts such as making requests and apologies in different languages and cultures (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989). Applied linguists have examined the development of pragmatic competence in second language learners and the possibilities for teaching pragmatics (e.g. Kasper 1996). Written language has not been ignored, however, and contrastive discourse has been applied to description and teaching implications for second language learners (e.g., Connor 1996).

4.2   Language use in context: contributions of discourse analysis

Outside the area of language pedagogy, the burgeoning of discourse analysis in the past two decades has provided a means whereby linguistic insight can be applied to numerous real-world situations, particularly of an institutional nature (see chapter 17, Discourse Analysis). Numerous colloquia and papers at AAAL conferences, for example, have presented research findings on how patients and health care professionals express power, solidarity, and politeness by use of various linguistic forms (e.g. Ainsworth-Vaughn and Saunders 1996). Special attention has been paid to Alzheimer's patients in particular and to the elderly in general. A long-term project investigating the language of ageing has described the language of disenfranchisement used in discourse between healthcare workers and elderly patients and is moving towards tentative recommendations for healthcare workers and society in general on anti-ageist language (Coupland 1997).

Other institutional and professional settings, too, have come under scrutiny from applied linguists using theoretical constructs to explain how language is used in real-world settings such as commerce, employment, and public services (DiPietro 1982). The attention of applied linguists has been turned to labor–management disputes and how power is expressed through subtle uses of language in conflict talk (O'Donnell 1990). The church, also, has received attention from applied linguists looking at how ministers use language to establish solidarity with their congregations even when they make requests, disagree, or admonish (Pearson 1988, Dzameshie 1995).

A field that has developed considerably in recent years in response to societal concerns is the investigation of language and gender. In both academic and popular work, for example, Deborah Tannen has noted the differing expectations that men and women bring to conversation, the language that reflects these differing perspectives, and the consequent miscommunication that can result (e.g. Tannen 1990). Recent empirical studies (e.g. Freed and Greenwood 1996) have enriched understanding of the interrelationship of language and gender and demonstrated that generalizations about male and female speech are unreliable when the particular communicative contexts in which the speech occurs have not been examined. Other work has examined gender and language cross-culturally and in specific institutional settings (Freed 1995).

4.3   *Language maintenance and endangered languages and dialects*

The work of applied linguists on endangered or minority languages and dialects brings together field linguistics (see chapter 6), anthropology, sociolinguistics and education. For example, a longitudinal study of language use and cultural context among young Inuit children in northern Quebec draws together socio-linguistic research into language use, research in language socialization, and second language acquisition research into educational discourse (Crago 1992). Similarly, work among Native Americans in Oklahoma that has been designed to maintain native languages has combined work with native speaker inform-ants to compile dictionaries and grammars with training of these same inform-ants as teachers of their ancestral languages in their communities (Yamamoto 1995). It is not only minority languages that are under threat, but also dialects. Work on the endangered dialect of Ocracoke Island off the coast of North Carolina has combined descriptive linguistics and dialectology with a program of education in the public school whereby children and the community are encouraged to document their distinctive dialect, cherish it, and – it is hoped – thereby preserve it (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1995).

5   The Chapters in This Section

While illustrative examples in this chapter have focussed on the traditional specialty of second language teaching, the previous section indicates that applied linguistics has expanded beyond this core area. The remaining chapters in this section of the book exemplify the work that applied linguists do outside the field of language teaching, the kinds of questions they seek to answer, the problems they seek to solve, and the processes by which theory and practice interact in applied linguistics.

James Gee's chapter on education (27) summarizes some of the many ways in which linguistics can inform educational practice. The chapter opens with a discussion of theories of language and how differing theories will produce dif-ferent results in curricula and classroom teaching. He also considers language use in academic versus informal texts and how the dialect and discourse con-ventions of the classroom may differ from those that children bring to school.

Rebecca Treiman's chapter on reading (28) demonstrates how theory and research can inform practice in teaching children to read. She applies the re-sults of psycholinguistic research on bottom-up and top-down processing and word recognition to teaching practice and demonstrates the contribution of linguistics to understanding the processes involved in learning to read and to spell. She considers the difficulties dyslexics have and closes with a discussion of the effects of literacy on cognition.

David Crystal's chapter on clinical linguistics (29) describes the contributions a linguist can make in accurately identifying symptoms of speech pathology. Crystal highlights the process by which the applied linguist clarifies, describes, diagnoses, and assesses the problem. By conducting a systematic survey, the clinical linguist can gain insight into the linguistic abilities of a patient and is thus able to suggest effective means of intervention.

Roger Shuy's chapter on forensic linguistics (30) considers ways in which applied linguistics can assist law and the legal profession. He describes some of the types of cases in which a linguist might be consulted such as trademark infringement, product liability, speaker identification, authorship of written documents, and criminal cases. Future work for forensic linguists includes analysis of the language of power used in the courtroom, interpretation of courtroom testimony and documents for non-native speakers of English, and analysis of speech acts in evidence presented in court.

Christoph Gutknecht's chapter on translation (31) places translation within a communicative framework. He points to the problem-solving nature of translation as it is related to the specific needs and goals of the translation. He discusses principles of translation and some of the difficulties caused by various types of false friends. He considers some of the factors that condition the act of translation and the function of these factors. Lastly, he considers the status of and outlook for machine and computer-assisted translation.

Frank Anshen's chapter on language planning (32) takes applied linguistics to the macro-level of national policies and planning with respect to language and demonstrates the multidisciplinary nature of applied linguistics. He describes examples of nations that have chosen monolingualism, equal multilingualism, and regional language systems and considers some of the factors affecting those choices and the consequences of language policies.