

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF
APPLIED LINGUISTICS

EDITED BY

Robert B. Kaplan

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

William Grabe

Merrill Swain

G. Richard Tucker

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

2002

CHAPTER 1

APPLIED LINGUISTICS:
AN EMERGING DISCIPLINE
FOR THE
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

WILLIAM GRABE

A realistic history of the field of applied linguistics would place its origins at around the year 1948 with the publication of the first issue of the journal *Language Learning: A Journal of Applied Linguistics*. While there are certainly other possible starting points, particularly from a British perspective, this time still accords roughly with any discussion of the beginning of applied linguistics.

Over the years, the term *applied linguistics* has been defined and interpreted in a number of different ways, and I continue that exploration in this overview. In the 1950s, the term was commonly meant to reflect the insights of structural and functional linguists that could be applied directly to second language teaching, and also, in some cases, to first language (L1) literacy and language arts issues as well. In the 1960s, the term continued to be associated with the application of linguistics-to-language teaching and related practical language issues (Corder 1973; Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens 1964; Rivers 1968). At the same time, applied linguists became involved in matters of language assessment, language policies, and a new field of second language acquisition (SLA), focusing on learning, rather than on teaching. So, by the late 1960s, one saw both a reinforcement of the centrality of second language teaching as applied linguistics, and also an expansion

into other realms of language use. In this respect, applied linguistics began to emerge as a genuine problem-solving enterprise.

In the 1970s, the broadening of the field of applied linguistics continued, accompanied by a more overt specification of its role as a discipline that addresses real-world language-based problems. While the focus on language teaching remains central to the discipline, it takes into its domain the growing subfields of language assessment, SLA, literacy, multilingualism, language-minority rights, language planning and policy, and teacher training (Kaplan 1980; Kaplan et al. 1981; Widdowson, 1979/1984). The notion that applied linguistics is driven first by real-world problems rather than theoretical explorations, has had four major consequences:

- The recognition of locally situated contexts for inquiry and exploration, and thus the importance of needs analyses and variable solutions in differing local contexts.
- The need to see language as functional and discourse based, thus the re-emergence of systemic and descriptive linguistics as resources for problem-solving, particularly in North American contexts.
- The recognition that no one discipline can provide all the tools and resources needed to address real-world problems.
- The need to recognize and apply a wide array of research tools and methodologies to address locally situated language problems.

These trends took hold and evolved in the 1980s as major points of departure from an earlier, no longer appropriate, "linguistics applied" perspective. The central issue remained the need to address language issues and problems as they occur in the real world. Of course, since language is central to all communication, and since many language issues in the real world are particularly complex and long-standing, the emerging field has not simply been reactive, but rather, has been, and still is, fluid and dynamic in its evolution. Thus, definitions of applied linguistics in the 1980s emphasized both the range of issues addressed and the types of disciplinary resources used in order to work on language problems (Grabe and Kaplan 1992; Kaplan 1980). In the 1980s, applied linguistics truly extended in a systematic way beyond language teaching and language learning issues to encompass language assessment, language policy and planning, language use in professional settings, translation, lexicography, multilingualism, language and technology, and corpus linguistics (which has continuously held a far greater attraction for applied linguistics than for theoretical linguists). These extensions are well documented in the first ten years of the journal *Applied Linguistics* and in the *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics (ARAL)*.

By the close of the 1980s, a common trend was to view applied linguistics as incorporating many subfields (as indicated earlier) and as drawing on many supporting disciplines in addition to linguistics (e.g., psychology, education, anthro-

pology, sociology, political science, policy studies and public administration, and English studies, including composition, rhetoric, and literary studies). Combined with these two foundations (subfields and supporting disciplines) was the view of applied linguistics as problem driven and real-world based rather than theory driven and disconnected from real language use (Kaplan and Widdowson 1992; Stevens 1992). Applied linguistics evolved further in the 1990s, breaking away from the common framing mechanisms of the 1980s. These changes are taken up in later sections. A parallel co-evolution of linguistics itself also needs to be commented upon to understand why and how linguistics remains a core notion for applied linguistics.

WHERE IS LINGUISTICS? THE 1970S, 1980S, AND 1990S

Beginning in the 1960s, generative linguistics in the United States came to dominate formal linguistic theorizing for the next forty years. So pervasive was its influence that few other competing theories of language knowledge or language analysis were able to resist its dominance. Many applied linguists, particularly in the United States, were led to believe that generative linguistics was the only real foundation for understanding language form, expression, and acquisition. Chomskian linguistics—first transformational, then Government and Binding, then Minimalism—was seen as the leading direction for understanding the fundamental nature of language knowledge (or, perhaps, syntactic knowledge). Despite schisms and alternatives within this framework, the basic tenets have remained thoroughly generative (rule-based systems that, in principle, derive all of the grammatical sentences of a language). While there are obvious problems with generative linguistics—(1) the suspect status of data and evidence, (2) the assumption of competence apart from performance, (3) the notion of the idealized speaker, (4) the default genetic (non)explanation for language acquisition, and (5) the minimal interface with real-world uses (and abuses) of language—generative linguistics remains a powerful influence over linguists and nonlinguists alike. It has also had an undeniable impact on applied linguists of all persuasions, as Widdowson (2000a) points out, some aspects of which are clearly positive. However, as most trained applied linguists are well aware, a number of competing orientations and approaches have survived the onslaught and now are gaining ground among applied linguists, for the very practical reasons that they are more useful for solving language-based problems.

Among these competing frameworks for linguistic analysis, growing recognition is being given to systemic linguistics, descriptive and corpus linguistics, and functional linguistics. All three have demonstrated that they can be effective approaches for the analysis of language data collected in a range of language-use contexts. They provide socially relevant and accessible reference points for interpretation of language data that can be connected to language-based issues in other disciplines. They also relocate the basic unit of analysis from the clause unit to the discourse or textual unit, reflecting again a closer link to language use in the real world.

Anthropological linguistics and sociolinguistics have similarly adopted more functional and descriptive approaches to language and analyze discourse-level data that reflect the settings in which the data were collected. To a lesser extent, pragmatics and psycholinguistics have moved toward more descriptive data and away from theory-internal research assumptions, this being particularly true for the subfield of cross-cultural pragmatics (which may be more appropriately interpreted as a subfield within applied linguistics, rather than as formal linguistics). This shift in linguistic research subfields indicates a growing recognition that relevant language data and use occurs in real-world contexts and must be analyzed in ways that recognize these situations.

For applied linguistics research, the shift to discourse analysis, descriptive data analysis, and interpretation of language data in their social/cultural settings all indicate a shift in valuing observable language data over theoretical assumptions about what should count as data (Beaugrande 1997; Van Lier 1997). One of the most useful perspectives to have arisen out of this evolution of a more relevant linguistics has been the development of register analysis and genre analysis as they apply to a wide range of language use situations (Johns 2001). Both of these approaches, along with more refined techniques for discourse analysis, are now hallmarks of much applied linguistics research. In fact, many applied linguists have come to see the real-world, problem-based, socially responsive research carried out in applied linguistics as the genuine role for linguistics, with formal linguistics taking a supporting role. As Van Lier (1997) notes:

I think that it is the applied linguist, who works with language in the real world, who is most likely to have a realistic picture of what language is, and not the theoretical linguist who sifts through several layers of idealization. Furthermore, it may well be the applied linguist who will most advance humankind's understanding of language, provided that he or she is aware that no one has a monopoly on the definitions and conduct of science, theory, language research, and truth. (1997: 103)

Some second language educators have gone even further in suggesting that language teachers actually do not need any real training in linguistics and language awareness (see Crandall 2000).

TRENDS AND PERSPECTIVES IN THE 1990S

In this section, I only note various developments that emerged in the 1990s and that will continue to define applied linguistics through this decade. The present volume provides the details to much of the brief sign-posting that this section provides. For much the same reason, I refrain from a long catalog of appropriate references on the assumption that these ideas will be well-referenced elsewhere.

Under the umbrella of applied linguistics, research in language teaching, language learning, and teacher education is now placing considerable emphasis on notions of language awareness, attention and learning, "focus on forms" for language learning, learning from dialogic interactions, patterns of teacher-student interaction, task-based learning, content-based learning, and teacher as researcher through action research. Research in language learning has shifted in recent years toward a focus on information processing, the emergence of language ability from extended meaningful exposures and relevant practice, and awareness of how language is used and the functions that it serves (see Doughty and Williams 1998b; N. Ellis 1999; Gass 1997; MacWhinney 1999; McCarthy and Carter, 1994; Robinson 2001; Schmidt 1995; Van Lier 1995, 1996; Van Lier and Corson, 1997). Instructional research and curricular issues have centered on task-based learning, content-based learning, dialogic inquiry, and a return to learning centered on specific language skills (Grabe et al. 1998; Skehan 1998b; Snow and Brinton 1997; Swain 2000; Wells 1999).

Language teacher development has also moved in new directions. Widdowson (1998a) has argued forcefully that certain communicative orientations, with a pervasive emphasis on natural language input and authenticity, may be misinterpreting the real purpose of the language classroom context and ignoring effective frameworks for language teaching. He has also persuasively argued that applied linguists must support teachers through their mediation with all aspects of Hymes's notion of communicative competence, balancing language understanding so that it combines grammaticality, appropriateness, feasibility, and examples from the attested (Widdowson, 2000a). A further emphasis for language teacher education has been the move to engaging teachers in the practice of action research. The trend to train teachers as reflective practitioners, inquiring into the effectiveness of teaching and learning in local classroom settings, will increase in the new decade.

A second major emphasis that has taken hold in discussions among applied linguists themselves is the role for critical studies; this term covers critical awareness, critical discourse analysis, critical pedagogy, student rights, critical assessment practices, and ethics in language assessment (and language teaching) (Davies

1999b; Fairclough 1995; McNamara 1998; Pennycook 1997b; Rampton 1997b; Van Lier 1995, 1997). At the same time, there are a number of criticisms of this general approach and its impact on more mainstream applied linguistics that highlight weaknesses in much of the critical studies theorizing (Widdowson 1998b, 1998c). At present, critical studies is also an emphasis that has not demonstrated strong applications in support of those who are experiencing "language problems" of various types. The coming decade will continue this debate.

A third emphasis is on language uses in academic, disciplinary, and professional settings. This research examines the ways in which language is used by participants and in texts in various academic, professional, and occupational settings. It also emphasizes how language can act as a gatekeeping mechanism or create unfair obstacles to those who are not aware of appropriate discourse rules and expectations. In academic settings, the key issue is understanding how genres and register expectations form the basis for successfully negotiating academic work (Hyland 1999; Johns 1997, 2001; Swales 2000). Analyses of language uses in various professional settings are described in Atkinson (1999a), Gibbons (1999), Hyden and Mishler (1999), and Swales (2000). More specific to English for Special Purposes (ESP), Swales (2000) and Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) provide strong overviews.

A fourth emphasis centers on descriptive (usually discourse) analyses of language in real settings and the possible applications of analyses in corpus linguistics, register variation, and genre variation. A breakthrough application of corpus linguistics is the recent *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber et al. 1999): It is based entirely on attested occurrences of language use in a very large English corpus. The key, though, is not the corpus data themselves but the innovative analyses and displays that define the uniqueness of the grammar. Other important applications of corpus linguistics include the teacher-friendly introduction to discourse analysis by McCarthy and Carter (1994) and their more recent description and resource materials for the study of spoken English (Carter and McCarthy 1997; McCarthy 1998).

A fifth emphasis in applied linguistics research addresses multilingualism and bilingual interactions in school, community, and work and professional settings, or in policy issues at regional and national levels. Since the majority of people in the world are bilingual to some extent, and this bilingualism is associated with the need to negotiate life situations with other cultures and language groups, this area of research is fundamental to applied linguistics concerns. Multilingualism covers issues in bilingual education, migrations of groups of people to new language settings, equity and fairness in social services, and language policies related to multiple language use (or the restriction thereof). Key issues are addressed in Baker and Jones (1998), Grabe et al. (1997), and Rampton (1995b).

A sixth emphasis focuses on the changing discussion in language testing and assessment. In the past ten years, the field of language assessment has taken on a

number of important issues and topics that have ramifications for applied linguistics more generally. Validity is now powerfully reinterpreted and, in its new interpretation, has strong implications for all areas of applied linguistics research and data collection (Bachman and Palmer 1996; Chapelle 1999a). Similarly, emphases on technology applications, ethics in assessment, innovative research methodologies, the roles of standardized testing and alternative assessment, standards for professionalism, and critical language testing are all reshaping language assessment and, by extension, applied linguistics (Clapham 2000; Clapham and Corson 1997; McNamara 1998).

A seventh and final emphasis addresses the role of applied linguistics as a mediating discipline and applied linguists as mediators. Over the past decade, discussions about the role of applied linguists, as a bridge between research and practice, have been raised by Widdowson and a number of other scholars (Beaugrande 1997; Widdowson 2000b). At issue is not only the work of applied linguists but also the status of applied linguistics as an academic enterprise (Rampton 1997b; Tucker 2000; Van Lier 1997; Widdowson 1998c; Wilkins 1999). In some of these debates, there are still discussions of the applied linguist as an "MA generalist" or "language teacher." It should be clear from this review that applied linguists in the modern world require training and expertise far beyond such outmoded designations. (And, for this reason, master's degree programs, in and of themselves, are not the appropriate locus of training for applied linguists [Grabe and Kaplan 1992].)

THE PROBLEM-BASED NATURE OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS: THE PROBLEMS, NOT THE DISCIPLINES

In the many discussions of trends, and disciplines, and subfields, and theorizing, the idea is sometimes lost that the focus of applied linguistics is on trying to resolve language-based problems that people encounter in the real world, whether they be learners, teachers, supervisors, academics, lawyers, service providers, those who need social services, test takers, policy developers, dictionary makers, translators, or a whole range of business clients. A list of major language-based problems that applied linguistics typically addresses across a wide range of settings follows. The list is necessarily partial, but it should indicate *what* it is that applied linguists try to do, if not *how* they go about their work. Applied linguists address subsets of the following problems:

- Language learning problems (emergence, awareness, rules, use, context, automaticity, attitudes, expertise)
- Language teaching problems (resources, training, practice, interaction, understanding, use, contexts, inequalities, motivations, outcomes)
- Literacy problems (linguistic and learning issues)
- Language contact problems (language and culture)
- Language inequality problems (ethnicity, class, region, gender, and age)
- Language policy and planning problems (status planning and corpus planning; ecology of language)
- Language assessment problems (validity, reliability, usability, responsibility)
- Language use problems (dialects, registers, discourse communities, gate-keeping situations, limited access to services)
- Language and technology problems (learning, assessment, access, and use)
- Translation and interpretation problems (on-line, off-line, technology assisted)
- Language pathology problems (aphasias, dyslexias, physical disabilities)

These categories could be expanded further, and ideas in each category could be elaborated into full articles in and of themselves. The key point, however, is to recognize that it is the language-based problems in the world that drive applied linguistics. These problems also lead linguists to use knowledge from other fields, apart from linguistics, and thereby impose the interdisciplinarity that is a defining aspect of the discipline.

DEFINING APPLIED LINGUISTICS

In this chapter, I have defined applied linguistics as a practice-driven discipline that addresses language-based problems in real-world contexts. However, this general definition does not come to terms with many of the claims that applied linguistics is not a discipline. Critics note that applied linguistics is too broad and too fragmented, that it demands expert knowledge in too many fields, and that it does not have a set of unifying research paradigms. However, it is possible to interpret applied linguistics as a discipline much in the way that many other disciplines are defined. It has a core and a periphery, and the periphery blurs into other disciplines that may or may not want to be allied. This picture may not be very different from those of several other relatively new disciplines in academic

institutions. The following points reflect commonalities that most applied linguists would agree on:

1. Applied linguistics has many of the markings of an academic discipline: professional journals, professional associations, international recognition for the field, funding resources for research projects, a large number of individuals who see themselves as applied linguists, trained professionals who are hired in academic institutions as applied linguists, students who want to become applied linguists, and a recognized means for training these students to become applied linguists.
2. Applied linguistics recognizes that linguistics must be included as a core knowledge base in the work of applied linguistics, although the purpose of most applied linguists' work is not simply to "apply" linguistics to achieve a solution.
3. Applied linguistics is grounded in real-world, language-driven problems and issues (primarily by linkages to practical issues involving language use, language evaluation, language contact and multilingualism, language policies, and language learning and teaching). There is also, however, the recognition that these practically driven problems have extraordinary range, and this range tends to dilute any sense of common purpose or common professional identification among practitioners.
4. Applied linguistics typically incorporates other disciplinary knowledge beyond linguistics in its efforts to address language-based problems. Applied linguists commonly draw upon and are often well trained in psychology, education, anthropology, political science, sociology, measurement, computer programming, literature, and/or economics.
5. Applied linguistics is, of necessity, an interdisciplinary field, since few practical language issues can be addressed through the knowledge resources of any single discipline, including linguistics.
6. Applied linguistics commonly includes a core set of issues and practices that is readily identified as work carried out by many applied linguists (e.g., language teaching, language teacher preparation, and language curriculum development).
7. Applied linguistics generally incorporates or includes several further identifiable sub-fields of study: second language acquisition, forensic linguistics, language testing, corpus linguistics, lexicography and dictionary making, language translation, and second language writing research. Some members of these fields do not see themselves as applied linguistics, though their work clearly addresses practical language issues.
8. Applied linguistics often defines itself broadly in order to include additional fields of language-related studies (e.g., language pathology, natural language processing, first language literacy research, and first language

composition studies). The large majority of members of these fields do not see themselves as applied linguistics, but the broad definition gives license for applied linguists to work with and borrow from these disciplines for their own goals.

These eight points indicate the emerging disciplinary nature of applied linguistics. There are certainly difficulties for the field and problems with defining the core versus the periphery. There are also problems in deciding how one becomes an applied linguist and what training (and what duration of training) might be most appropriate. But these problems are no more intractable than those faced by many disciplines, even relatively established ones (e.g., education, psychology).

CONCLUSION

The coming decade of research and inquiry in applied linguistics will continue the lines of investigation noted in the second and third sections of this chapter. Applied linguists will need to know more about corpus linguistics, computer applications for research purposes, and new ways to examine language data. Testing and assessment issues will not be limited to testing applications but will have a much greater influence on other areas of applied linguistics research (Clapham 2000): Issues such as validity, fairness in testing, and ethics (Chapelle 1999a, McNamara 1998) will extend to other areas of applied linguistics (e.g., Bachman and Cohen 1998). These issues will also lead to continued discussions on the most appropriate research methods in different settings (Hornberger and Corson 1997). Applied linguistics will also direct more attention to issues of motivation, attitude, and affect as they potentially influence many language-based problems. Similarly, learning theories will become a more central concern in language learning and teaching. There has been relatively little attention explicitly given to learning theories as they are debated in educational and cognitive psychology.

All of these issues also ensure that applied linguistics will remain interdisciplinary. The resolution of language-based problems in the real world is complex and difficult. It is only appropriate that applied linguists seek partnerships and collaborative research if these problems are to be addressed in effective ways.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH APPROACHES IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS

PATRICIA A. DUFF

In a field as vast as applied linguistics (AL), representing the range of topics featured in this volume, an overview of research approaches must be 'highly' selective, a mere sampling and culling of major trends and developments in research perspectives and methods in a number of areas. In this chapter, I discuss recent quantitative and qualitative approaches to AL research and consider some future directions for the field.

Interestingly, no existing textbook provides a comprehensive treatment of contemporary quantitative and qualitative research approaches in AL, although many previous publications have dealt with aspects of AL research methodology, such as quantitative research design and statistics (e.g., Brown 1988; Hatch and Lazaraton 1991); research methods in language and education (Hornberger and Corson 1997); and approaches to research in second language (L2) studies specifically (e.g., Johnson 1992; Kasper and Grotjahn 1991; Nunan 1992; Seliger and Shohamy 1989). Furthermore, no methods textbook in AL is devoted to qualitative research methods, although some volumes (e.g., Bailey and Nunan 1996; Chaudron 1988; Johnson 1992; Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991; Nunan 1992; Seliger and Shohamy 1989; Van Lier 1988) and articles (e.g., Cumming 1994; Davis 1995; Edge and Richards 1998; Lazaraton 1995, 2000) discuss qualitative methods such as case study and ethnography and look at related methodological issues. Many other publications have highlighted specific analytical approaches or methods for conducting research, typically within a particular realm of AL, such as L2 classroom research; these include ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (Markee