Language Education and Applied Linguistics

Bridging the two fields

Howard Nicholas and
Donna Starks

LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND APPLIED LINGUISTICS

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PREFACE

When we set out to write this book we envisaged a dialogue between Language Education and Applied Linguistics. This requires us to engage with a broad and diverse range of material from three distinct fields, Language Education, Applied Linguistics and Linguistics. Readers contemplating our table of contents might wonder at the temerity of anyone attempting to address the identified range of issues in Language Education, Applied Linguistics and Linguistics in a single volume. As we wrote, we often felt the same way. We persevered because we felt the need to bring the different fields into a space where they could engage with one another across their varied ways of being and doing. However, we are conscious that despite the length of the (much reduced!) reference list, we have only touched (and sometimes quite unevenly) on the wealth of available ideas in each field. We hope that our exclusions can be forgiven in light of the larger attempt to frame a productive conversation.

There are strong views of Linguistics embedded within Applied Linguistics and Language Teaching. As we worked on clarifying the relationship between the fields, we realized that we needed to reframe insights from Linguistics and make explicit what these views do and do not offer the other two fields. One of the key steps in helping to bridge the fields involves building a wider framework so that both Language Education and Applied Linguistics find their focus within it. This involved conceptualizing a framework sufficiently comprehensive to enable communication, learning and teaching to be positioned in relation to one another. With such a perspective, learners' resources are not viewed as narrow discrete systems but as larger communicative systems that overlap and combine in rich and complex ways. A second important step in bridging the fields is focusing on the individual as the key locus of language education activity and to engage with learners' views of their own language learning.

When we take a view that individuals are the key locus of language education activity, we can begin to describe the individual's communicative repertoire as a structured system, organized via four dimensions: modes, mediations, varieties and purposes. We present this repertoire through diagrams and figures that could be employed in language learning, pre-service and in-service teacher training and in analysing and critiquing theories of additional language and literacy learning as well as broader areas of multilingualism.

We have introduced the term Multiplicity to refer to the space in which communicative selections are made from the communicative repertoire, whether they are monolingual, plurilingual or translanguaged in form.

Our attention to the notions of self, Multiplicity and the communicative repertoire allows prospective language educators and current teachers in both schools of Education and programmes in Applied Linguistics to extend their focus on dimensions of communication that are not typically presented in methods textbooks or unpacked in the detail that they are here. We hope that by offering a structured view of the resources that are drawn on in the creation of both a communicative repertoire and the individual's Multiplicity, we have provided a way forward to engaging in much-needed detailed discussions of these issues in Applied Linguistics and Language Education, in all of their many and varied forms.

The relationships between Applied Linguistics and Language Education are complex and varied as not all contexts define the fields similarly. In some contexts Applied Linguistics is synonymous with Language Education while in others it has been tightly linked to second language acquisition research and TESOL. This book attempts to provide a framework useful to different perspectives while at the same time giving greater attention to areas we consider vital for communication in increasingly multilingual and globalized contexts. Few TESOL programmes in the US introduce students to the depth of sociolinguistic work profiled in this volume or build links from Halliday's and Hymes' work to classroom choices. The depth of work on modes and mediations in this volume is also greater than what is normally introduced to Applied Linguistics students. Simultaneous consideration of additional language and literacy acquisition and studies of plurilingualism is rarely integrated into studies of Language Education in the ways we have presented here, and although increasing attention is being devoted to alternative views of the communicative repertoire, structured views of how the communicative repertoire connects with learning and learning processes are yet to be elaborated. Our framework offers such a shift in perspective to elaborate ways of understanding the communicative needs and practices of plurilinguals in today's globalized multimodal contexts.

This book consists of three parts. In Part I, we outline our theoretical framework and show how it builds on and draws from established research in the fields of Linguistics, Multimodality, Sociolinguistics and Discourse Analysis. In Part I, we describe the communicative repertoire as a structured system and present a view of self and how he or she notices, selects and combines features to form communicative acts. In Part II of the volume, we explore three fields central to Applied Linguistics and Language Education, additional language acquisition, additional language literacy

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and plurilingualism, and show how our framework provides a useful lens for exploring these fields. In Part III we explore some of the ways Multiplicity as a framework is useful for Language Education for learners, teachers and language educators. We hope that this framework will be embraced and expanded to many other areas and we invite graduate students and researchers in Applied Linguistics and Language Education to engage in debating, refining and expanding on the ideas presented here.

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we were doing and made us rethink how we needed to present our ideas. We hope that we have done their queries the justice they deserve.

We are grateful to all of those mentioned for their contributions, but none of them should be held responsible for the way that we have interpreted them. We are also very thankful to our families, who kept with us during all those late nights where we paid more attention to our computers than we paid to them.

The image for self that we have used in our Figures was sourced from Openclipart.org (http://openclipart.org/detail/78061/faceless-woman-walking-by-laobc).

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PART I

Multiplicity: a framework for understanding language

1

INTRODUCTION

The need for a new conceptual framework

This book offers a framework for how Applied Linguistics, Language Education and Linguistics can each contribute to ways of knowing and doing in the respective other fields. This is no easy task since the definitions of these fields are themselves not universally agreed. There has been a substantial debate within Applied Linguistics about whether it should be understood as the application of linguistic insights (linguistics applied) or whether it is a field in its own right that engages with a wider problem space (see Davies 1999 and Hall et al. 2011). In some circles, the nature of the problem space has been defined narrowly in relation to second language acquisition, in others it has been restricted to language teaching, in yet others it has focused on uses of languages in varied types of institutions. Equally, Language Education as a field has been used to refer to either one or all of: dominant, mother tongue literacy practices (the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Programme for International Student Assessment, PISA), 'foreign' language education (Michigan State University's Center for Language Education and Research, CLEAR), minority language education, education in multiple languages (Council of Europe) and bilingual education (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO). And finally, Linguistics itself is understood in widely differing ways (see Newmeyer 1986; Halliday 1993). Framing the relationships will vary according to the context of the reader.

There are numerous accessible recent works outlining the fields of Applied Linguistics, Language Education and Linguistics. Some are descriptive in nature, outlining the knowledge base necessary for both understanding the field and for distinguishing it from its more theoretical counterparts. There are also numerous accessible recent works that outline linguistic and sociolinguistic contributions to the field of Language Education and to professional practice. There is a similarly extensive literature in the field of Linguistics. There are however relatively few works that embrace and explore what the fields of Applied Linguistics, Language Education and

Linguistics share as concerns, including how the first two draw on Linguistics so as to illuminate how participants can connect with the others' fields and the associated knowledge bases. In order to work across these diverse fields we explore, structure and elaborate on individuals' communicative resources and their individual communicative repertoires to build a robust bridge to connect key concepts about linguistic resources for communication with key understandings about the nature of emerging or established plurilingualism and pluriliteracies and with key insights into emerging plurilingual and pluriliterate resources and how they can be supported and deployed.

As one's view of the world is affected by one's place within it, we make explicit that we situate ourselves within the field of Language Education. We belong in this domain as academics within a Faculty of Education. But, having been trained outside this field, in Applied Linguistics and Sociolinguistics respectively, we also see the Language Education world from the outside. We experience the struggle with this duality each time we deal with queries about differences between Applied Linguistics and TESOL, assign an Applied Linguistics reading for our students or read their summaries of this literature in their assessments. We also see the enormous untapped power within our own students' ways of knowing and doing, and how it is underutilized by Applied Linguistics. As we read our students' work, we see ways in which we need to act to equip them to use the knowledge base within the field of Applied Linguistics to its fullest potential. At the same time we see ways in which much of the literature in both Linguistics and Applied Linguistics fails to be framed so that it engages with the ways of knowing and doing and the talking about knowing and doing of Language Education. What is lacking is a frame that enables the commonalities between the fields to be seen and explored.

In this volume we aim to create a view of communication that informs, clarifies, includes and empowers individuals from different fields to engage with people's communicative repertoires. The book is intended to be of equal use to those in Language Education seeking to understand the communicative repertoires of their students and those in Applied Linguistics seeking to enter into discussions about what their knowledge has to contribute to language classrooms as well as to linguists who wish to delve inside the communicative repertoire itself. We offer a unified framework to position linguistic insights within that dialogue. To do this, it is vitally important to understand the assumptions, explicit and implicit, in the terms that we use, and to understand the limitations and advantages they offer us. Applied Linguistics and Language Education are both applied fields that engage heavily with concepts about language organization and language use from within the respective theoretical fields of Linguistics, Psycholinguistics and Sociolinguistics and the labelling of constructs is often the first barrier to fruitful discussions.

Labelling

Working within Bourdieu's framework, Gunter (2004: 21) contends that 'knowing about knowledge claims and field labels is an important means by which we can

control practice and identities'. Although Gunter works in Educational Leadership, her labelling construct is still very useful for conceptualizing similarity and difference within the fields of Applied Linguistics and Language Education.

Gunter (ibid.) argues that labelling has three distinct purposes:

> it gives clarity of meaning that facilitates both understanding by self and by others;
> it organises what we do and so connects with or disconnects from other activity by self and by others;
> it is a power 'to' and 'over' process through creating boundaries that include and exclude.

Underlying the labels are the actions of self and others that constitute any activity. Both Language Education and Applied Linguistics include activities such as thinking, doing, writing and speaking. By examining how these and other activities are constructed within the two fields we are able to explore the relationships between Language Education and Applied Linguistics.

Gunter (2004: 22) argues that labelling is tied to professional practice. It ensures that:

> there is an appropriately qualified [ ], in the right [ ], at the right time, with the right group of [ ], and the right equipment, and [ ] resources

Gunter left the brackets empty. In Language Education, the person who would be inserted is often a teacher with his/her students (and teaching resources). In Applied Linguistics, it is often a researcher with his/her participants and equipment. Yet, in our contexts, the two are entangled, as teaching and research are part of the mandate of both applied linguists and Language Education specialists. Teachers are encouraged to connect theory and practice in their teaching, and applied linguists seldom have careers that are research-only; many are themselves educators. Linguistics is likewise a complex field of study which intersects with both Applied Linguistics and Language Education in multiple and diverse ways and is also labelled quite distinctively. We illustrate some of this diversity in an attempt to clarify both what the fields are about and how they are used for different purposes.

Linguistics

Linguistics is the scientific study of language: it focuses on 'the what' of language. But 'the what' is diverse and varied. For some, views of language place language as a form of abstract knowledge. Such views of language are presented by two renowned linguists: Ferdinand de Saussure and Noam Chomsky. Saussure (1915) used the French term *langue* to refer to this abstract notion and Chomsky (1965) referred to it as an underlying competence. For linguists in this tradition, language is described as a system of knowledge – what is known rather than what is articulated. When looking

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