SELECTED WORKS OF
on Applied Linguistics
HENRY WIDDOWSON

魏多逊
应用语言学自选集

Henry Widdowson（英）著

Selection Series
of World-Famous
Applied Linguists

世界应用语言学
名家自选集

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To my granddaughters

Isadora and Josephine

出版前言

"世界应用语言学名家自选集"丛书收录世界知名应用语言学家的学术论文和专著章节，结集成书，共 10 部。本丛书的出版可填补两方面的空白：1. 以世界知名应用语言学家为主线的自选集；2. 以应用语言学学科为主题的系列丛书。

应用语言学有狭义和广义之分，狭义的应用语言学指跟语言教学密切相关的学科，如二语习得、教学法、语言测试等；广义的应用语言学则指利用语言学的理论解决社会生活的实际问题的边缘学科，如社会语言学、翻译学、词典学、文体学等。本丛书除有些学者的研究集中于狭义的应用语言学概念之外，一般采用广义应用语言学的概念。

本丛书选用的文章多散见于国外学术期刊、论文集和专著，时间跨度较大，读者不易觅得。这些文章汇集成自选集，充分展示了诸位名家对应用语言学各分支学科的研究脉络，是应用语言学研究领域不可多得的资料，可作为英语教师、英语专业研究生、师范院校英语本科生等从事科研、撰写论文的参考文献。

丛书编写体例如下：

一、收录发表于学术期刊、论文集中的学术论文以及学术演讲，文章字数无严格限制。专著中的章节酌情收录。

二、所收论文的语言仅限英语。

三、所收论文的内容须与应用语言学有关，纯语言学理论、文学研究、国情研究类论文不收录。

四、所收论文大多为原已发表过的文章，基本保持原貌以尊重历史的真实。文章一般注明论文发表的时间和发表刊物的名称(或论文集、专著书名)和期号(或出版社名)。文章格式也基本保持发表时的原貌。未在刊物上发表过的文章，如演讲等，则注明对外发布(成稿)的时间、地点和场合。

五、作者可将新的观点以尾注的方式放在相应论文的后面，表明作者目前的观点与当时有所不同。

六、每部选集作者撰写自序，详细地记录作者求学、教学、治学的经历和感悟。书后附有作者主要学术著述的目录。

<div align="right">世界应用语言学名家自选集编委会
2009 年 2 月 18 日于北京</div>

世界应用语言学名家自选集
编委会

序

为了向我国读者介绍应用语言学,外语教学与研究出版社精心筹划和出版"世界应用语言学名家自选集"丛书,确是一项不可多得的壮举。丛书中包括有《魏多逊应用语言学自选集》,嘱我作序,感到万分荣幸。

魏多逊(Henry Widdowson)是一位蜚声国际的应用语言学大师。他从小就热爱诗歌,在剑桥大学读英国文学,后到印尼大学去当英国文学讲师时,发现他的学生要欣赏文学必须首先扫除语言障碍,才逐步把眼光投向英语教学。但他对英国诗歌的爱好却为他日后从事应用语言学研究打下了深厚的人文基础,他的《实用文体学》就是从应用语言学的角度来讨论英诗的欣赏和教学。魏多逊学识渊博,勤于思考,勇于创新,在世界应用语言学中是一位开山巨匠。他爱提出两分法(dichotomies),"疑义相与析",例如所提出的语言/交际、用法/使用、语码与语境、成品/过程、系统/图式、参照/表征、训练/教育、专门用途/一般用途、应用语言学/语言学应用[1],往往能发人深省。

魏多逊的这本自选集有 25 篇论文,分为 5 个部分,每一个部分都有一段简介。全书还有一篇自传式的文章,介绍他自己的治学生涯,弥足珍贵。

第一部分"应用语言学"的 5 篇论文都是围绕应用语言学和语言学应用的区别而展开的,直接提出这个问题是 1980 年"模型与虚构"和 2000年的"论语言学应用之局限",期间相距 20 年,但作者仍刻意录入,因为这个问题曾引起应用语言学界的一场热烈的争论。其他 3 篇也和这个问题有关。这个问题至关重要,因为它牵涉到怎样定义应用语言学和确定它的研究范围的问题。

第二部分"英语"有 4 篇论文,讨论由于英语全球化而导致的英语拥有权的问题。魏多逊认为不能认为只有本族语使用者才是英语的拥有者,因为英语已经成为很多人的通用语。他们必然会引进一些新的用法。

第三部分"语篇分析"有 4 篇论文。作者很早对语篇分析就怀有兴趣,他在东巴基斯坦当英国文化委员会的英语官员时就发现,那里技术学院的学生难以看懂他们的教科书。后来他到爱丁堡大学念应用语言学,

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[1]　见 Guy Cook 和 Barbara Seidlhofer 为献给魏多逊而出版的论文集 Principles and Practice in Applied Linguistics 中的 An Applied Linguist in principle and practice 一文,"应用语言学/语言学应用"是我加上去的。

就以"应用语言学的语篇分析方法"作为他的博士论文的题目。其后又顺着这个思路提出 ESP(English for Specific Purposes, 专门用途英语)。接着魏多逊又将视线转移到 CDA(Critical Discourse Analysis, 批评性语篇分析)。CDA 的研究目的是展示语言是怎样在意识形态上影响观点。但是魏多逊指出,应该把文本分析和语篇理解区别开来。

第四部分"文体学"有 6 篇论文,讨论文学文本使用什么语言特征来发挥其文学功能,文学作品怎样在语言教学中发挥其作用,怎样进行文学教学,等等。在语言教学中发挥文学的作用是作者一生的追求。

第五部分"语言的学和教"有 6 篇论文。在这个问题上,魏多逊已经出版了 3 本书: *Teaching Language as Communication (1978), Aspects of Language Teaching(1990), Defining Issues in English Language Teaching (2003)*。收集在本集的几篇文章都是对这些著作的补充,牵涉到三个方面的问题:使用者所经验到的语言,语言理论和语言描述所表示的语言,作为学习科目所安排的语言。例如一般的看法是语言和文化是不可分割地交错在一起的,在母语使用者的经验里可能是这样的,但是这是否适用于二语学习者? 这是否意味着把英语作为国际性语言而学习必须牵涉到学习母语使用者的民族文化? 又比如二语学习的条件在多大程度上必须和第一语言使用的条件保持一致? 在二语学习中,学习者内心不可避免地存在另一种语言——他们的第一语言,对这种语言的意识通常都是受到压制的,这有何根据? 这一部分的头 4 篇论述怎样作为一个科目来定义语言,特别是英语。最后两篇则和师资教育有关,作者强调,教师所受的不仅是技术的训练,而且需要学会了解他们为什么必须这样做的原则,在实践中参照理论,使理论和实践相关。

魏多逊的文章博大精深,别出机杼,鞭辟入里,说理性甚强。他的许多论文散见于杂志和文集,不容易找到。现在经他自行挑选,成为一本不可多得的珍品。我竭诚向读者推荐。魏多逊也算是我们的老朋友,1985 年他来广州外国语学院参加首届中国英语教学国际讨论会,在会上做了题为 Abstraction, Actuality and the Condition of Relevance 的精彩发言,从哲学的高度来讨论语言描述和语言教学的关系。并送我他的两本近著。前年他又应邀来我校参加教学法的国际讨论会,20 年未见,风采依旧。

桂诗春

广东外语外贸大学　语言学及应用语言学研究中心

Preface: Remembrance of Things Past

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought

I summon up remembrance of things past...

(William Shakespeare)

I thought at first that the writing of a summary of my academic career would be a fairly simple thing to do. It turned out to be more difficult than I imagined. It is easy enough to record chronological events in sequence: periods of employment, dates of publications and so on. But once I began to reflect on these events, I felt the need to give them some structure, to identify thematic continuities and developments in thinking. So it is that, looking back, I make sense of the past and from the perspective of the present, impose an order upon it not apparent at the time. The remembrance of things past is inevitably an interpretation of things past. So what follows is not a record but a recollection: a partial and personal version of the course of my own professional history.

For as long as I can remember, I have been intrigued by the English language, and I suppose my whole career can be seen as a personal exploration into its mysteries. At first, of course, in childhood, the language was simply part of the ordinary everyday experience of upbringing, customary and commonplace and with nothing mysterious about it at all. But when I was eleven years old, I went to secondary school, and there I was introduced to poetry. Like other children, I knew my nursery rhymes, but this was something different. You didn't have to try to understand what nursery rhymes were all about. You couldn't take *little boy blue, the cat and the fiddle, three blind mice* seriously: these rhymes were verbal games to play with and had no other purpose. But poetry claimed to have something significant to say, and this significance had something to do with patterns of language, with verse form, metre and rhyme. The poem that made a particular impression on me at that tender age was Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard,* which was presented to us in our English lesson. It is

not easy now to appreciate why our teacher thought this was an appropriate choice for a class of eleven-year-old boys. But the poem was a well known classic and came from a collection called *The Golden Treasury*, a late Victorian compilation that was still in 1946 regarded with reverence and still had something of the status of a poetical Bible or Book of Common Prayer. Probably what our teacher had in mind in exposing us to Gray's *Elegy* was a kind of initiation into our cultural heritage by a kind of quasi-religious experience. The theme of the poem would also no doubt have seen as particularly appropriate to this purpose, for it dealt with the eternal verities of life and death and the human condition. So there we were—a class of schoolboys confronted with this text, a kind of holy poetic writ. The boys were mystified, and the effect on most of them was negative. The poem was, like so much else at school, something obscure that they were being instructed in, but without quite knowing why. But for me, the mystery was fascinating.

> *The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,*
> *The lowing herd winds slowly o' er the lea,*
> *The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,*
> *And leaves the world to darkness and to me...*

What was all this about a curfew tolling a knell? I had no clear idea, but it had something to do with the parting day and its very vagueness seemed to add to the growing darkness, and somehow it was the patterning of sounds and rhythms that seemed to convey an impression of the scene even more than the meaning of the words themselves: the winding slowly o' er the lea (whatever a lea might be), the ploughman plodding his weary way. I was quite entranced and for days, I remember, I would recite the lines to myself as I walked to school. And my fascination continued even when encountering verses full of words that defied any understanding:

> *Can storied urn or animated bust*
> *Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?*
> *Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,*
> *Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of death?*

These lines too I chanted to my enchanted self, mystified but intrigued by their elusive strangeness. I had become addicted to poetry. And I went on to feed the addiction with other poems in The Golden Treasury. I discovered

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Wordsworth, who was especially fascinating because his language was often so simple—how did he manage to make such ordinary everyday words mean so much? Subsequently, quite naturally, I tried my hand at composing my own poems, hoping to express what I could not explain, seeking to master this mystery for myself in some small way. Not with any great success. My efforts were unimpressive imitations, derived doggerel all about nature and sunset and death. But at the time I thought they were really rather good. Some even got printed in the school magazine.

These early compositions have long since disappeared in the forgotten archives of the past, but not the addiction that gave rise to them. This not only remained but later grew to take in more poetry, dramatic as well as lyric (Shakespeare was a revelation) and prose fiction. At school I was required to study other subjects of course, apart from English, and I dutifully did so. These included other languages—French and German—and I did what was necessary to meet the requirements. But not with any degree of enthusiasm. I was not really very good at learning other languages—I was too thoroughly absorbed by my own and the challenges posed by its mysteries. Then, at the age of 18, an English literature addict and an aspiring poet, off I went to study at King's College, Cambridge.

At Cambridge I studied English literature for two years to my heart's content. I then ill-advisedly decided to study French and German literature in my third and final year inspired by the totally unrealistic aim of tracing the development of romanticism in these three different literatures. Given my lack of enthusiasm or aptitude for languages other than English, this was not a wise move. My grasp fell sadly short of my reach and this was decisively confirmed by the poor result I got in my final exam. This effectively put paid to my most cherished ambition, which was to become a university lecturer in Britain, preferably in a place as much like Cambridge as possible, and teach English literature, and especially poetry, to generations of admiring students.

Just over two years later, in November 1958, after a period of limbo doing military service in the Royal Navy, I began to look for employment and found, to my surprise, that there was, after all, a way that I could realise my ambition, if I modified it a little and was prepared to travel. I read an advertisement for a post of lecturer in English literature at the University of Indonesia. True this was not Cambridge, but I would be lecturing on English literature, and there would presumably be plenty of

admiring students there. I applied and to my delight was appointed. Within weeks, I had shaken the dust of England off my feet, put past disappointments behind me, and found myself in front of a class of students in Jakarta. This was indeed not at all like Cambridge and I very soon discovered that lecturing on English literature there was a very different proposition from what I had fondly imagined it would be. I had thought to adopt the sophisticated, somewhat languid, manner of the lecturers that had so impressed me in Cambridge, but it became immediately obvious that this would not do at all. The reaction of many of my students to the literary texts I talked about was not unlike that of my school-mates to Gray's *Elegy*. They were baffled by them, negatively mystified. For them it was the very language itself that was the main mystery, not the way it was used to literary effect. It became clear that the first priority therefore was to make literary texts linguistically accessible in some way as a necessary condition on any appreciation of their literary effect. In short, I had to reluctantly conclude that I could not be a literature lecturer without being a language teacher at the same time. The difficulty was that I knew nothing about language teaching. So for three years I improvised and managed as best I could.

My Indonesian experience thus led me to ponder on another mystery— the mystery not of how English, once acquired, could be used to such powerful and yet elusive effect, but of how it could be effectively acquired as a foreign or other language in the first place. This I found particularly intriguing, I think, because of my own deficiency in foreign language learning aptitude. Other people seemed to learn other languages more readily, with or without instruction. How did they do it? What kind of instruction was likely to provide the best inducement for learning? I had no idea. Nor did I know at that time that these questions had already been addressed and that a good deal had already been written on the teaching of English as a foreign language. My background was literary after all. I knew next to nothing about language, and even less about language learning.

In spite of this ignorance, I was in early 1962 appointed by the British Council to a post in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) as an Education Officer, in which capacity I 'advised' schools and colleges on how to go about their English teaching. The following year I was transferred to Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) with the title of English Language Officer and here, inexpert as I still was, I was charged with the responsibility of providing expert guidance in teacher training and the design of textbooks for secondary

schools. I had meanwhile suggested to the British Council that it was high
time that I acquired some formal credentials to lend some credibility to my
supposed expertise, and in 1964 I was sent to follow a course in applied
linguistics in Edinburgh. I was not entirely sure what applied linguistics was,
other than that it took a more theoretical, and so more prestigious, approach
to foreign language pedagogy, and that suited me. So off I went to get
myself qualified as an expert, and to explore at last the mystery of foreign
language acquisition that I had first become aware of in Indonesia some five
years earlier.

   1964 in Edinburgh was a time of some considerable transitional turmoil
in linguistics and language teaching. Michael Halliday had left and John
Lyons had arrived. The focus of interest was shifting from systemic
description to generative theorizing, from a primary concern with
performance and the patterns of actual language behaviour, to a study of
abstract competence and underlying cognitive processes. Pit Corder, the
newly appointed director of the applied linguistics department and his
colleagues, encouraged us to enquire into what possible implications all this
might have for well entrenched and essentially structuralist ideas about
language teaching and learning. New and old ideas jostled together in our
minds as we sought to realign and reconcile them. These were heady and
inspiring times. One effect they had on me was that they stimulated me to
nurture the germ of an idea that had occurred to me during my time in
Bangladesh, namely that English would be more effectively learned if it was
not treated as an entirely separate subject but integrated with another subject
on the school curriculum. I wrote a short dissertation on this topic for my
diploma. This idea has since taken root in what is now known as Content and
Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) but it was novel at the time. The
dissertation was entitled *The Teaching of English Through Science* and my
supervisor, Ronald Mackin suggested it should be published. He was at that
time joint editor with Peter Strevens of a new Oxford University Press series
Language and Language Learning. My paper eventually appeared in 1968,
together with two others, by Julian Dakin and Brian Tiffen, in a book called
Language and Education. It was my first publication, and I felt very pleased
with myself.

   But this paper was a milestone in my personal history for other reasons
as well. It marked the beginning of my thinking about ESP—how English
teaching might be made more specific, expressly designed to serve the

purposes of students in academic education or technical training. On my return to Bangladesh in late 1965, I tried my hand at designing materials along these lines as an experiment and concluded that more research was needed to establish a sound rationale for this approach and put it on a firmer footing. I proposed to the British Council that they might support such research by sending me back to Edinburgh to do a PhD but this they politely declined to do, though they were, somewhat reluctantly, prepared to grant me unpaid leave of absence. Fortunately, a temporary position fell vacant in the department of applied linguistics at that time, and Pit Corder offered it to me. So on a bleak January day in 1969 I found myself back in Edinburgh aglow with excitement, ready to embark, if only temporarily, on an academic career.

It turned out not to be temporary after all. Two years later, a permanent lecturer post became available, for which I successfully applied. Meanwhile I had been busy pursuing the ideas that I had set in train four years earlier. Initially, I thought my research task would be a relatively straightforward one. If we were to design English materials to enable students to cope with the kind of language usage of their fields of study, then all we needed to do was base these materials on a description of this usage in terms of what Halliday called register. It soon became apparent, however, that such a simple descriptive exercise would not serve the purpose for two reasons. One had to do with pedagogy. Having described the features of usage of a particular register, one was still left with the problem of how these features were to be selected and taught. The description itself represents the goal to be eventually achieved, but it tells us nothing about what language is needed to induce the process of learning that students have to go through to achieve it. A second reason had to do with the limitations of the register approach itself as an account of language use. What it did was to describe usage in terms of linguistic features—lexical and grammatical forms and meanings. In other words it described text. But text is only produced in the process of formulating different concepts, enacting different kinds of communication. The linguistic features of text that register analysis reveals are only symptomatic of what people are actually using the language for—to define, to describe, to explain and so on. In short, a register analysis does not tell us how the language functions pragmatically as discourse. So I came to the realisation—obvious now, but not so obvious then—that what students needed was guidance into how different kinds of discourse were achieved in

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English. This was something that a register analysis could not of its nature provide, for (as I put it in the introductory chapter of my thesis):

> ...discourse was not simply linguistic data but a form of communication whose character could not be captured by a statistical statement of the relative frequency of its constituent linguistic elements. (Widdowson 1973:2).

And so I ventured into the field of discourse analysis, not just out of theoretical curiosity but because my practical purpose took me there. These days, of course, the field is somewhat crowded, but at that time it was relatively unpopulated and unexplored. There were one or two notable pioneers who had recently arrived there, coming from different disciplinary directions. Both the sociolinguist Labov with his study of language in its social context (Labov 1970), and the philosopher Searle with his speech acts (Searle 1969) explored, in their different ways, how linguistic expressions become communicative actions, in other words how discourse is achieved. And then there was Hymes with his notion of communicative competence (Hymes 1972) which was also concerned with (in Austin's phrase) 'how to do things with words', or (in Labov's phrase) 'relating what is done to what is said and what is said to what is done'. Once primed to think about language use in this way, I found that I could discern pragmatic significance even in formal models of grammar. For example, I saw Fillmore's idea of specifying the underlying propositions of sentences in terms of case categories (Fillmore 1968) as a way of identifying the basic concepts in different discourses, and the various ways in which they are textualized. And then, I reflected, if different surface forms are formulations of the same set of underlying features, then they can be taken as alternative ways of saying the same thing, and in this case the various transformational rules that have to be postulated to derive these various surface forms from a common propositional base can be seen as having a pragmatic function. Transformations, I suggested,

> may be seen as a means of processing underlying structures not only to make them more easily communicable, but as means of preparing such structures for the performance of different communicative acts. (Widdowson 1973:173 – 174)

The years when I was doing my research in Edinburgh were a period of enthusiastic intellectual discovery. Or perhaps it was invention, I don't know—and anyway it is not always easy to tell the difference. But whatever

it was, I found it inspiring, especially since it seemed to be directly concerned with what had always intrigued me—how is it that people, and not just poets, can make language mean so much and in so many different ways.

By the Spring of 1973 my doctorate was done. The thesis had its merits as an early excursion into discourse analysis and might even have claimed to be the first of its kind in the field, and I was urged to revise it for publication. But I had had enough of the thesis by then and felt drained of enthusiasm for it. I lacked self assurance too: I did not feel sufficiently confident to expose my work to the critical gaze of the linguistic community. And anyway, I had begun to feel the pull of my old addiction for literature, and this was hard to resist, particularly since it had been fed by the ideas I had been exploring in my research. So I turned my attention to stylistics—the discourse analysis of literary texts—and considered how far it could serve as the basis for an effective pedagogy for the teaching of literature. I returned to the problems I had first become aware of in Indonesia 15 years earlier, and wrote a book called *Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature*. This was published in 1975.

Meanwhile, although my thesis was unpublished, it had not gone to waste. What motivated the research in the first place was the feeling that the communicative needs of students learning English for specific purposes called for a different approach than had been practised hitherto. The research had given some indications of what such an approach might be. The next step was to follow them through to see how they might work out in practice in the design of ESP materials. I did not take this step on my own. I collaborated with my Edinburgh colleague Patrick Allen and together we designed and edited the *English in Focus* Series.

But although it was the problem of ESP that prompted the research, the relevance of what emerged from the research was not confined to ESP. Far from it. Enquiry into the nature of language use, the pragmatics of discourse, suggested the possibility of taking a communicative orientation to language teaching and learning in general, and this is what I proposed in my book *Teaching Language as Communication*. Although now over thirty years old, this book, to my surprise, is still in print and, presumably, still being read. However, it does not seem to have been much used as an explicit point of reference for subsequent or current thinking about foreign language teaching. The aim of the book was, as I put it in the concluding paragraph, to enquire into underlying principles of language pedagogy and ' to explore

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their implications for the teaching of language as communication' (Widdowson 1978: 163). My purpose was not to persuade readers into a wholesale acceptance of what I was proposing but to provoke further critical enquiry into the line I took. I had rather hoped that the book would open up some kind of critical enquiry and that there might be some continuity of debate deriving from it about the validity of the principles I adduced and the feasibility of their practical implications. But there has been little in the way of such continuity, as far as I can see, but rather a succession of apparently unconnected proposals, and this, I have to confess, has always been something of a disappointment.

Central to the argument of the entire book is the idea that a focus on discourse leads to a fundamental reappraisal of conventional language teaching practices. I pointed out, for example, that the well established division of kinds of language behaviour into four skills was essentially based on a conception of performance as having to do with the management of the medium or channel, of how linguistic forms are processed orally/aurally in speech, visually in writing and so belongs to a behaviourist/ structuralist way of thinking. For if one thinks of the enactment of discourse, of language as it actually used, what becomes apparent is not separation but interdependency. In a conversation, for example, people do not just take turns to speak words and sentences, they engage in an interaction whereby the speaker turn continually changes and what is said is a reaction to what is heard. Similarly, the act of writing is not an independent manifestation of linguistic knowledge, but is generally prompted by reading, and designed with possible reader reactions in mind. Writing, like spoken language use, is also, as communication, essentially interactive and just as much the realization of a discourse process. To take these abilities apart and treat them as separate skills, I argued, misrepresents how language is actually used and is inconsistent with a communicative approach to language pedagogy. Furthermore, it is likely for that reason to make the language learners' task more difficult. For the learners then have to cope not only with unfamiliar language forms and meanings, but required to do so by manifesting them in ways that bear little resemblance to their experience of how their own language works. This in turn, of course, raises the question of how far their learning of a foreign or other language should be related to their past linguistic experience—whether and how translation might be put to effective pedagogic use. My argument then provided the rationale for a more