

A Glossary of Applied Linguistics

ALAN DAVIES

discourse

register

communicative competence

critical period

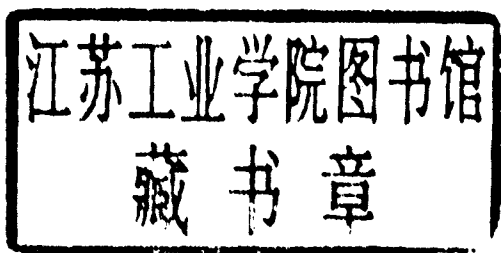
educational linguistics

interlanguage

language assessment

A Glossary of Applied Linguistics

Alan Davies



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Acknowledgements

Writing a single authored glossary of applied linguistics has advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are, it is to be hoped, coherence and a unified perspective. The disadvantages are the lack of expertise across so wide-ranging a field and the inevitable solitariness of the task. But, as Dr Johnston's old friend, Mr Edwards, remarked: 'cheerfulness was always breaking in', encouraged as I have been by Catherine Elder and by Sarah Edwards of EUP, and delighted as I have also been by my grandchildren, George, Alice and Hannah.

Preface

Acronyms in the glossary are normally explained. Some that are not and are made use of several times are:

Lx Source language

Ly Target language

L1 First language

L2 Second language – any second language since for an individual it may be the second, third or fourth

Terms highlighted within entries will be found as head-words elsewhere in the Glossary.

The text refers to a number of scholars. These include:

Anderson, Benedict

Bakhtin, Mikhail

Barth, Frederik

Bernstein, Basil

Bormuth, John R.

Brass, Paul

Brumfit, Christopher

Carroll, John B.

Chomsky, Noam

Corder, S. Pit

Cummins, Jim

Fairclough, Norman

Ferguson, Charles

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Likert, Renis
Malinowski, Bronislaw
Marx, Karl
Osgood, Charles E.
Perren, George E.
Phillipson, Robert
Piaget, Jean
Sapir, Edward
Sapon, Stanley M.
Saussure, Ferdinand de
Selinker, Larry
Spolsky, Bernard
Thurstone, Louis Leon
Voloshinov, Valentin
Vygotsky, Lev
Weir, Cyril
Whorf, Benjamin Lee
Widdowson, Henry G.

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Introduction

The urgent question mark against applied linguistics is just what is its source, what exactly is being applied. If the interpretation of applied linguistics is very narrow so that what is being applied is only linguistics, then because linguistics, like other theoretical disciplines, deals with idealisations, it appears to have very little to say about the language-related problems in what we call the real world. If applied linguistics is interpreted very broadly, then it must concern itself with everything to do with language. Neither position is tenable. Linguistics, it seems, must play an important role in applied linguistics but by no means the only role. Applied linguistics must also draw on psychology, sociology, education, measurement theory and so on.

It may be that we shall gain a clearer picture of the nature of applied linguistics if we turn our attention away from the source (what applied linguistics draws on) to its target (what applied linguistics equips you to do). The target clearly cannot be anything and everything to do with language. Corder's solution (Corder 1973) was to focus on language teaching, widely interpreted, and therefore including, for example, speech therapy, translation and language planning. Such narrowing of the target still makes sense today, which is why most of the entries in this glossary have some connection with language teaching. Our reasoning is that it remains true that many of those who study applied linguistics have been

and will continue to be involved at some level in language teaching, which is, after all, the largest profession involved in language studies. This is not to say that once a language teacher, always one: some, perhaps many, of those who engage with applied linguistics move on to research, administration and so on. But for the purposes of the glossary we have found it helpful to provide ourselves with this constraint on what it is we claim as applied linguistics. What that means is that, while we accept Brumfit's definition – 'A working definition of applied linguistics will then be the theoretical and empirical investigation of real-world problems in which language is a central issue' (Brumfit 1997: 93) – in this glossary we avoid the danger of the 'science of everything' position by targeting language teaching. At the same time we recognise that the world of language learning and teaching is not an artificial world but one that must engage every day with Brumfit's real-world problems, involving success and failure, ability and disability, ethical, cultural and gender issues, technology and lack of resources, the difficult and the simple, the child and the adult.

References

- Brumfit, Christopher, 'How applied linguistics is the same as any other science', *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 1997, 7/1: 86–94.
- Corder, S. Pit, *Introducing Applied Linguistics*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973.

A

AAAL American Association of Applied Linguistics, the professional organisation of American applied linguists. Membership is open: there are no restrictions on entry based on qualifications, experience or nationality. AAAL is now the largest **applied linguistics** association and attracts large number of applied linguists world-wide to its annual conferences. Its view of applied linguistics is both eclectic and comprehensive.

AAVE African American Vernacular English, also termed, at various times, Black English and **Ebonics**. AAVE represents (or is said to represent) the **dialect** (or, as more militant commentators would say, the **language**) of Black Americans. Undoubtedly, AAVE represents a dialect of English that is widely used among Black Americans in informal spoken interactions. The issue that is unresolved is whether this dialect should be officially recognised as the medium of **education** for young Black Americans (see **world Englishes**), the argument being that young Black Americans are more likely to develop cognitively if taught in their own dialect and if that dialect is accorded official status (see **BICS**). Such an argument remains contentious and is not accepted by all (or perhaps by most) Black Americans, although some linguists do support it.

ability Current capacity to perform an act. **Language teaching** is concerned with a subset of cognitive or mental abilities and therefore with skills underlying behaviour (for example, reading ability, speaking ability) as well as with potential ability to learn a language (**aptitude**). Ability has a more general meaning than terms such as **achievement**, attainment, aptitude, **proficiency**, while capacity and **knowledge** are sometimes used as loose synonyms. Ability is difficult to define and to investigate, perhaps because it cannot be observed directly. See also **language testing**.

academic discourse The use of language at an advanced level of education to discuss cognitively difficult concepts for analysis and for argument. One of the more robust language uses which are grouped under the heading of LSP, it readily lends itself to **proficiency** teaching and testing. It seems likely that what distinguishes academic discourse from general discourse is difficulty, itself attributable to precision of concept formation and development.

accent Features of the speech signal that identify individuals as belonging to certain groups which may be geographical or **social class**-based. While a particular **dialect** may be spoken in a variety of accents, the reverse is not the case. **Education** and status are more closely associated with a standard dialect and more leeway is permitted to accent variation. However, in spoken interaction accent is very salient and undoubtedly influences interlocutors' judgements of one another. Perhaps because accent is more resistant to change than dialect (hence foreign accents) and more easily identified with origin and **identity**, there is little emphasis today on using education to change accent. Even so, it does seem

that one of the effects of education (however indirect) is to bring about some **accommodation** towards a **norm** with **prestige**.

accommodation The tendency for all interlocutors to move their own **language use** closer to one another's for ease of understanding and for greater solidarity, both linguistically and attitudinally. **Power** imbalance seems to affect the degree of accommodation, whereby the less powerful make greater accommodation when interacting with the more powerful. However, neither relationship nor power is straightforward and it is important to recognise different dimensions of power, which can include strength of **personality**.

accuracy We may distinguish traditional and critical approaches to accuracy. The traditional view is that there is a correct way to use the rules and especially the **grammar** of Language X. The purpose of **education**, therefore, both L1 and L2, is seen to be the inculcation of those rules, especially at the higher levels of education, in writing. The approach of **critical applied linguistics** seems to be to reject the assumption of **norms**, which would imply that accuracy is not relevant. However, it is unclear whether critical applied linguistics would go that far since, without norms, **language** would be difficult to learn and to teach. The critical applied linguistic concern with the need to recognise where **power** in language resides and therefore who decides what is accurate seems at odds with its assumption that norms are not important.

achievement Tests that measure progress on a known syllabus are called achievement (or attainment) tests. They are not concerned with predicting future success or

with assessing whether the level reached by a candidate is sufficient to carry out various non-language tasks (such as being a tour operator, studying medicine in the medium of the language): that is the role of the **language proficiency test**. The purpose of the achievement test is to determine whether the language material that has been taught has been learned.

acquisition Naturalistic learning of a **language**, whether L1 or L2. Language acquisition is therefore to be distinguished from **language learning**, which refers to the formal method(s) of language acquisition. The terms are, however, often used interchangeably.

acrolect The variety that has the most **prestige** in a **dialect** continuum, followed by the **mesolect** and at the bottom the **basilect**.

act of identity All **speech acts** are said by Le Page to represent a speaker's **identity** in a particular **context**. The assumption is that individuals have a verbal repertoire which allows them to choose how to indicate the identity they wish to claim.

action research **Research** (in, for example, the classroom or the hospital ward) which offers engagement, commitment and observation in place of the rigid controls expected of, for example, **positivist** research. Whether action research deserves to be regarded as research is a moot point. But tell that to the anthropologists.

adjacency pair A basic organisational sequence in conversation. Adjacency pairs are formulaic type utterances in conversation in which the first part of the pair by A triggers the second part by B (for example: How are you

today/I'm very well, thank you). Failure to complete the adjacency pair is infelicitous and indicative of either a lack of proficiency or deliberate deviousness. See also **CA**, **ritualised routines**.

advertising A paid-for form of non-personal communication about an organisation, product, service or idea by an identified sponsor. Both advertising and **propaganda** are said to be one-to-many forms of communication.

African American Vernacular English see **AAVE**

age factors Age is a determinant in **language acquisition**, in that for **native speaker** control in Language X to be achieved, language acquisition must normally take place before the critical or sensitive age. Age also seems to affect **language learning** (as it does other aspects of learning) in that with the gradual effluxion of time, language learning becomes more difficult. Furthermore, age also has a negative effect on already acquired and learnt languages. Individuals tend in later life to lose second languages, although this may be (as with community languages) a function more of lack of use than of age. Age also has a negative effect on L1, whereby immediate recall, especially for names, is less automatic with increasing age. See also **critical period**, **SLAR**.

AILA Association Internationale de Linguistique Appliquée, known in English as the International Association of Applied Linguistics. AILA has been in existence since 1960 and brings together representatives from its thirty-plus national associations in an international committee to promote research and development in applied linguistics. AILA organises a peripatetic triennial congress and is associated with several journals, including the *AILA Review*. See also **AAAL**, **BAAL**.

ALAA Applied Linguistics Association of Australia.

alphabetic A system of written script in which there is a direct correspondence between **graphemes** and **phonemes**. As such, it is the most economical of all systems of writing. Languages vary in the degree of their grapheme–phoneme correspondence. Spanish is very regular while English is very irregular. Hence the many arbitrary spelling rules of written English children and non-native speakers must learn.

alphabetisation A necessary stage towards the acquisition in Language X of literacy. Much practised by missionary organisations such as SIL, alphabetisation provides a written formulation for the spoken language. Such formulation is indicative of the conventional nature of language, in that different alphabetisations are perfectly possible for the same language and may indeed be in conflict with one another. For example, in Fiji different missionaries advocated their own preferred formulation, to some extent influenced by a contrastive linguistics, based on their own mother tongue. See also **contrastive analysis**.

American Association of Applied Linguistics see **AAAL**

American English A distinction needs to be made between American Englishes, those varieties of English as an L1 spoken in different parts of the USA; and American English, the standard version of the dialect. While American English and **British English** (and **Australian English**, etc.) are mutually intelligible, each of them has certain distinct standard features which are attested to and described in **dictionaries** and style guides and appear in publishers' usage. At the beginning of the twenty-first

century, American English is by far the most influential of these national standards and seems likely for some time to come to exercise a globalising influence on the other standards. See also **language standards**.

American Sign Language see **deaf education**

analysis of variance A statistical technique which examines the interrelationship among a group of **variables** (for example, **social class**, **gender**, **age**, **L1**, second language proficiency) and in so doing estimates the influence on the **criterion** of each variable and of their joint influence.

anthropological linguistics In the USA, linguistics and anthropology grew up together. Linguistics was to some extent (perhaps because of the interest in American Indian languages) viewed as a branch of anthropology, a development also found in Australia. This influence has been instrumental in the interactions between anthropology (and sociology) and linguistics, leading to the growth of **sociolinguistics**, **ethnolinguistics** and **conversation analysis**, and to the continuing interest among many American applied linguists in **culture**: hence the development of ideas about **communicative competence**.

aphasias While age has a normal developmental influence on an individual's language control, traumas of various kinds, including head injuries and strokes, can damage the brain and cause an aphasia. Depending on the location and extent of the injury, this may cause loss of capacity to speak, wholly or in part, to write and to remember. See also **clinical linguistics**, **speech pathology**.

applied linguistics Definitions such as 'the exploration of

real-world problems in which language is important' are common, but it is necessary to point out that among those professing applied linguistics the focus of attention differs. Some, more interested perhaps in theoretical linguistic issues, focus on the language; others, perhaps more interested in social issues and their possible amelioration, focus on the problems themselves.

applied linguistics research Research in applied linguistics is no different from research in other disciplines, both theoretical and applied. There is, however, one difference, a difference that pertains to all applied areas. This is that many of its research areas are motivated by institutional needs and practical requirements. What this means is that the research paradigm which, in the theoretical disciplines, may be prompted by the paradigm currently in favour, in the applied disciplines is prompted by a social demand which itself may draw on the current paradigm.

aptitude see language aptitude

artificial languages The canonical cases of artificial languages can be found in those nineteenth-century inventions such as Esperanto and Idaho which had as their aim greater understanding among people and nations. But a case can be made for a more widespread definition whereby all language interventions result in non-natural language outcomes. Thus simplified languages (for example, Basic English), but also, to an extent, standard languages which are brought about by deliberate interventions and non-natural choices of lexis and grammar. See also **simplification**, **standards**.

ASL American Sign Language. See **deaf education**.