AN INTRODUCTION TO
APPLIED LINGUISTICS

edited by
NORBERT
SCHMITT

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Edited by

Norbert Schmitt
University of Nottingham

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If you want peace, work for justice

Preface

This book is intended to give you a broad overview of Applied Linguistics. It will introduce you to important areas in the field, and familiarize you with the key issues in each of those areas. The book is written at the 'sophisticated introduction' level, where the most current ideas in the field are presented, but explained in language that is accessible and direct. After having engaged with the knowledge in this introductory book, you should be able to move on to more advanced books and articles, such as those recommended at the end of each chapter in the 'Further Reading' section.

In addition to helping you become familiar with the issues in Applied Linguistics, the book will also help you become familiar with some of the research methodology currently being used in the field. Knowledge of this methodology is important in order to be able to read and understand original research studies in Applied Linguistics books and journals. A number of chapters show you how research in their area is carried out (for example, Chapter 9, *Sociolinguistics*, and Chapter 11, *Listening*), which should enable you to gain a greater awareness of various research approaches. In addition, each chapter has some data for you to analyse and interpret, with the authors' suggested solutions at the end of the book. These 'Hands-on Activities' will help to understand the information in each chapter better, because you will use some of it in your own analyses.

Applied Linguistics is a big field and one person cannot be an expert in all areas. To ensure that each chapter contains an authoritative treatment of an area, it is co-authored by two (and sometimes three) leading international specialists. By having two specialists writing together, the chapters can represent an expert consensus of the most important issues in that area. The various teams of authors working in their own separate areas have naturally developed different ways of discussing issues, and I have decided to let each team retain their own 'voice' and style, rather than trying to homogenize the chapters into a single style throughout the book. I hope you will find the result illuminating and engaging.

Although teams of authors will retain their individual identity, there is a common format for the chapters. First, each chapter opens with an

'Introduction' or 'What is X?' section which briefly explains what the area is and why it is important. The following section will be the heart of each chapter, where the key issues pertaining to the area are discussed. Next, the pedagogical implications of the area will be considered. Of course some chapters, such as Chapter 3, *Vocabulary*, may have more tangible pedagogical implications than others, such as Chapter 8, *Psycholinguistics*, but all will address pedagogical concerns. Each chapter has a 'Further Reading' section, with approximately six reading suggestions, complete with brief annotations. Finally, each chapter has a 'Hands-on Activity', where some data are presented for you to analyse and interpret. The authors present their suggestions in Chapter 16, *Suggested Solutions*.

The areas of Applied Linguistics are related to each other in various ways. This means that certain ideas will inevitably appear in more than one chapter. I have built a certain amount of this repetition into the book, because I believe a good way to learn key ideas is to see them approached from slightly different perspectives by several authors. When an idea is discussed in another chapter, it will usually be cross-referenced, for example: (see Chapter 4, *Discourse Analysis*, and Chapter 5, *Pragmatics*).

This book has been a team effort with 31 authors contributing their expertise. Writing sophisticated ideas in an accessible way is no easy task, and I thank them for their efforts. I also wish to thank the team at Arnold publishers, in particular Christina Wipf Perry, who have worked hard to ensure that all stages of the publishing process were academically rigorous, but refreshingly expedited. I learned a lot about Applied Linguistics by editing this book. I hope you will be able to say the same thing after reading it.

Norbert Schmitt
University of Nottingham
November 2001

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An Overview of Applied Linguistics

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Norbert Schmitt
University of Nottingham

Marianne Celce-Murcia
University of California, Los Angeles

What is Applied Linguistics?

'Applied linguistics' is using what we know about (a) language, (b) how it is learned and (c) how it is used, in order to achieve some purpose or solve some problem in the real world. Those purposes are many and varied, as is evident in a definition given by Wilkins (1999: 7):

> In a broad sense, applied linguistics is concerned with increasing understanding of the role of language in human affairs and thereby with providing the knowledge necessary for those who are responsible for taking language-related decisions whether the need for these arises in the classroom, the workplace, the law court, or the laboratory.

The range of these purposes is partly illustrated by the call for papers for the American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL) 2002 conference, which lists 18 topic areas:

- language and its acquisition
- language and assessment
- language and the brain
- language and cognition
- language and culture
- language and ideology
- language and instruction
- language and interaction
- language and listening
- language and media

- language and policy
- language and reading
- language and research methodology
- language and society
- language and speaking
- language and technology
- language and translation/interpretation
- language and writing.

The call for papers to the 2002 AILA conference goes even further and lists 47 areas in applied linguistics. Out of these numerous areas, the dominant application has always been the teaching and learning of second or foreign languages. Around the world, a large percentage of people, and a majority in some areas, speak more than one language. For example, a survey published in 1987 found that 83 per cent of 20–24-year-olds in Europe had studied a second language (Cook, 1996: 134). Also, in some countries, a second language is a necessary 'common denominator' ('lingua franca') when the population speaks a variety of different L1s. English is the main second language being studied in the world today with an estimated 235 million L2 learners (Crystal, 1995: 108), so it is perhaps not surprising that this book is written in that language, although the concepts presented here should be appropriate to non-English L2 teaching and learning as well. Figures concerning the numbers of people learning or using second languages can only be rough estimates, but they still give some idea of the impact that applied linguistics can have in the world.

Due to length constraints, this book must inevitably focus on limited facets of applied linguistics. Traditionally, the primary concern of applied linguistics has been second language acquisition theory, second language pedagogy and the interface between the two, and it is these areas which this volume will cover. However, it is also useful to consider briefly some of the areas of applied linguistics which will not be emphasized in this book, in order to further give some sense of the breadth of issues in the field. Carter and Nunan (2001: 2) list the following sub-disciplines in which applied linguists also take an interest: literacy, speech pathology, deaf education, interpreting and translating, communication practices, lexicography and first language acquisition. Of these, L1 acquisition research can be particularly informative concerning L2 contexts, and so will be referred to in several chapters throughout this book (*see* Chapter 7, *Second Language Acquisition*, and Chapter 8, *Psycholinguistics*, in particular, for more on L1 issues).

Besides mother tongue education, language planning and bilingualism/ multilingualism, two other areas that Carter and Nunan (2001) did not list are authorship identification and forensic linguistics. These areas exemplify how applied linguistics knowledge may be utilized in practical ways in non-educational areas. Authorship identification uses a statistical analysis of various linguistic features in anonymous or disputed texts and compares the results with a similar analysis from texts whose authors are known. When a match is made,

this gives a strong indication that the matching author wrote the text in question. The search for the anonymous author of the eighteenth-century political letters written under the pseudonym of Junius is an example of this. A linguistic analysis of the vocabulary in the letters (for example, whether *on* or *upon* was used) showed that it was very similar to the use of vocabulary in the writings of Sir Philip Francis, who was then identified as the probable author (Crystal, 1987: 68). Similar analyses are carried out in forensic linguistics, often to establish the probability of whether or not a defendant or witness actually produced a specific piece of discourse. Crystal (1987) relates a case where a convicted murderer was pardoned, partially because a linguistic analysis showed that the transcript of his oral statement (written by the police) was very different stylistically from his normal speech patterns. This discrepancy cast strong doubts on the accuracy of the incriminating evidence in the transcript.

In addition to all these areas and purposes, applied linguistics is interested in cases where language goes wrong. Researchers working on language-related disorders study the speech of aphasic, schizophrenic and autistic speakers, as well as hemispherectomy patients, in the belief that we can better understand how the brain functions when we analyse what happens when the speaker's language system breaks down or does not function properly.

The Development of Applied Linguistics

Early History

Interest in languages and language teaching has a long history, and we can trace this back at least as far as the ancient Greeks, where both 'Plato and Aristotle contributed to the design of a curriculum beginning with good writing (grammar), then moving on to effective discourse (rhetoric) and culminating in the development of dialectic to promote a philosophical approach to life' (Howatt, 1999: 618). If we focus on English, major attempts at linguistic description began to occur in the second half of the eighteenth century. In 1755, Samuel Johnson published his *Dictionary of the English Language*, which quickly become the unquestioned authority on the meanings of English words. It also had the effect of standardizing English spelling, which until that time had been relatively free (for example, the printer William Caxton complained in 1490 that *eggs* could be spelled as 'eggys' or 'egges' or even 'eyren' depending on the local pronunciation). About the same time, Robert Lowth published an influential grammar, *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762), but whereas Johnson sought to describe English vocabulary by collecting thousands of examples of how English words were actually used, Lowth prescribed what 'correct' grammar should be. He had no specialized linguistic background to do this, and unfortunately based his English grammar on a classical Latin model, even though the two languages are organized in quite different ways. The result was that English, which is a Germanic language, was described by a linguistic system (parts of speech) which was

borrowed from Latin, which had previously borrowed the system from Greek. The process of prescribing, rather than describing, has left us with English grammar rules which are much too rigid to describe actual language usage:

- no multiple negatives (I <u>don't</u> need <u>no</u> help from <u>nobody!</u>)
- no split infinitives (So we need <u>to really think</u> about all this from scratch.)
- no ending a sentence with a preposition (I don't know what it is made <u>of</u>.)

These rules made little sense even when Lowth wrote them, but through the ages both teachers and students have generally disliked ambiguity, and so Lowth's notions of grammar were quickly adopted once in print as the rules of 'correct English'. (*See* Chapter 2, *Grammar*, for more on prescriptive versus descriptive grammars.)

Applied Linguistics during the Twentieth Century

An Overview of the Century

The real acceleration of change in linguistic description and pedagogy occurred during the twentieth century, in which a number of movements influenced the field only to be replaced or modified by subsequent developments. At the beginning of the century, second languages were usually taught by the 'Grammar-translation method', which had been in use since the late eighteenth century, but was fully codified in the nineteenth century by Karl Plötz (1819–1881), cited in Kelly (1969: 53, 220). A lesson would typically have one or two new grammar rules, a list of vocabulary items and some practice examples to translate from L1 into L2 or vice versa. The approach was originally reformist in nature, attempting to make language learning easier through the use of example sentences instead of whole texts (Howatt, 1984: 136). However, the method grew into a very controlled system, with a heavy emphasis on accuracy and explicit grammar rules, many of which were quite obscure. The content focused on reading and writing literary materials, which highlighted the archaic vocabulary found in the classics.

As the method became increasingly pedantic, a new pedagogical direction was needed. One of the main problems with Grammar-translation was that it focused on the ability to 'analyse' language, and not the ability to 'use' it. In addition, the emphasis on reading and writing did little to promote an ability to communicate orally in the target language. By the beginning of the twentieth century, new use-based ideas had coalesced into what became known as the 'Direct method'. This emphasized exposure to oral language, with listening and speaking as the primary skills. Meaning was related directly to the target language, without the step of translation, while explicit grammar teaching was also downplayed. It imitated how a mother tongue is learnt naturally, with listening first, then speaking and only later reading and writing. The focus was squarely on use of the second language, with stronger proponents banishing all use of the L1 in the classroom. The Direct method had its own problems,

however. It required teachers to be highly proficient in the target language, which was not always possible. Also, it mimicked L1 learning, but did not take into account the differences between L1 and L2 acquisition. One key difference is that L1 learners have abundant exposure to the target language, which the Direct method could not hope to match.

In the UK, Michael West was interested in increasing learners' exposure to language through reading. His 'Reading method' attempted to make this possible by promoting reading skills through vocabulary management. To improve the readability of his textbooks, he 'substituted low-frequency "literary" words such as *isle*, *nought*, and *ere* with more frequent items such as *island*, *nothing*, and *before*' (Schmitt, 2000: 17). He also controlled the number of new words which could appear in any text.˙ These steps had the effect of significantly reducing the lexical load for readers. This focus on vocabulary management was part of a greater approach called the 'Vocabulary Control Movement', which eventually resulted in a book called the *General Service List of English Words* (West, 1953), which listed the most useful 2000 words in English. (*See* Chapter 3, *Vocabulary*, for more on frequency, the percentage of words known in a text and readability.) The three methods, Grammar-translation, the Direct method and the Reading method, continued to hold sway until World War II.

During the war, the weaknesses of all of the above approaches became obvious, as the American military found itself short of people who were conversationally fluent in foreign languages. It needed a way of training soldiers in oral and aural skills quickly. American structural linguists stepped into the gap and developed a programme which borrowed from the Direct method, especially its emphasis on listening and speaking. It drew its rationale from the dominant psychological theory of the time, Behaviourism, that essentially said that language learning was a result of habit formation. Thus the method included activities which were believed to reinforce 'good' language habits, such as close attention to pronunciation, intensive oral drilling, a focus on sentence patterns and memorization. In short, students were expected to learn through drills rather than through an analysis of the target language. The students who went through this 'Army method' were mostly mature and highly motivated, and their success was dramatic. This success meant that the method naturally continued on after the war, and it came to be known as 'Audiolingualism'.

Chomsky's (1959) attack on the behaviourist underpinnings of structural linguistics in the late 1950s proved decisive, and its associated pedagogical approach – audiolingualism – began to fall out of favour. Supplanting the behaviourist idea of habit-formation, language was now seen as governed by cognitive factors, in particular a set of abstract rules which were assumed to be innate. Chomsky (1959) suggested that children form hypotheses about their language that they tested out in practice. Some would naturally be incorrect, but Chomsky and his followers argued that children do not receive enough negative feedback from other people about these inappropriate language forms (negative evidence) to be able to discard them. Thus, some other mechanism

must constrain the type of hypotheses generated. Chomsky (1959) posited that children are born with an understanding of the way languages work, which was referred to as 'Universal Grammar'. They would know the underlying *principles* of language (for example, languages usually have pronouns) and their *parameters* (some languages allow these pronouns to be dropped when in the subject position). Thus, children would need only enough exposure to a language to determine whether their L1 allowed the deletion of pronouns (+pro drop, for example, Japanese) or not (–pro drop, for example, English). This parameter-setting would require much less exposure than a habit-formation route, and so appeared a more convincing argument for how children learned language so quickly. The flurry of research inspired by Chomsky's ideas did much to stimulate the development of the field of second language acquisition and its psychological counterpart, psycholinguistics.

In the early 1970s, Hymes (1972) added the concept of 'communicative competence', which emphasized that language competence consists of more than just being able to 'form grammatically correct sentences but also to know when and where to use these sentences and to whom' (Richards, Platt and Weber, 1985: 49). This helped to swing the focus from language 'correctness' (accuracy) to how suitable any use of language was for a particular context (appropriacy). At the same time, Halliday's (1973) systemic-functional grammar was offering an alternative to Chomsky's approach, in which language was seen not as something exclusively internal to a learner, but rather as a means of functioning in society. Halliday (1973) identified three types of function:

- *ideational* (telling people facts or experiences)
- *interpersonal* (maintaining personal relationships with people)
- *textual* (expressing the connections and organization within a text, for example, clarifying, summarizing, signalling the beginning and end of an argument).

This approach to language highlighted its communicative and dynamic nature. These and other factors pushed the field towards a more 'communicative' type of pedagogy. In the mid-1970s, a Council of Europe project (van Ek, 1976) attempted to create a Europe-wide language teaching system which was based on a survey of L2 learners' needs (*needs analysis*) and was 'based on semantic categories related to those needs, including the relevant concepts (*notions*) and uses of language (*functions*)' (Howatt, 1999: 624). The revised 1998 version (van Ek and Trim: 27) lists six broad categories of language function:

- imparting and seeking factual information
- expressing and finding out attitudes
- getting things done (suasion)
- socializing
- structuring discourse
- communication repair.

In addition, eight general categories of notions were listed, which are shown here with representative examples of their sub-classes:

- existential (existence, presence, availability)
- spatial (location, distance, motion, size)
- temporal (indications of time, duration, sequence)
- quantitative (number, quantity, degree)
- qualitative (shape, colour, age, physical condition)
- mental (reflection, expression of ideas)
- relational (ownership, logical relations, effect)
- deixis (anaphoric and non-anaphoric proforms, articles).

The materials from this project were influential (for example, *Threshold Level English*), and textbooks based on a notional–functional syllabus became widespread. In the early 1980s, a theory of acquisition promoted by Krashen (1982) focused attention on the role of input. Krashen's 'Monitor theory' posited that a second language was mainly unconsciously acquired through exposure to 'comprehensible input' rather than being learnt through explicit exercises, that it required a focus on meaning rather than form and that a learner's emotional state can affect this acquisition ('affective filter'). The pedagogical implications of this theory were that classrooms should supply a rich source of language exposure that was meaning-based and understandable, always including some elements just beyond the current level of learners' ability (*i+1*).

The methodology which developed from these factors emphasized the use of language for meaningful communication – communicative language teaching (CLT) (Littlewood, 1981). The focus was on learners' message and fluency rather than their grammatical accuracy. It was often taught through problem-solving activities and tasks which required students to transact information, such as information gap exercises. In these, one student is given information the other does not have, with the two having to negotiate the exchange of that information. Taken further, students could be taught some non-language-related subject, such as history or politics, in the L2. The assumption was that the learners would acquire the L2 simply by using it to learn the subject matter content, without the L2 being the focus of explicit instruction. Taking the communicative approach to its logical extreme, students could be enrolled in 'immersion' programmes where they attended primary or secondary schools which taught subject matter only in the L2.

Results from this kind of immersion programme, such as those initiated in Canada but which now also exist elsewhere, showed that learners could indeed become quite fluent in an L2 through exposure without explicit instruction, and that they developed excellent receptive skills. However, they also showed that the learners continued to make certain persistent grammatical errors, even after many years of instruction. In other words, a communicative approach helped learners to become fluent, but was insufficient to ensure comparable levels of accuracy. It seems as if a certain amount of explicit instruction

focusing on language form may be necessary as well. The current focus-on-form movement (for example, Doughty and Williams, 1998) is an attempt to inject well-considered explicit instruction back into language lessons without abandoning the positive features and results of the communicative approach.

Just as language pedagogy developed and advanced during this time, so did the field of language assessment. Until the 1980s, tests were evaluated according to three principal criteria:

- 'Validity' (did the test really measure what it was supposed to measure?)
- 'Reliability' (did the test perform consistently from one administration to the next?)
- 'Practicality' (was the test practical to give and mark in a particular setting?).

These criteria focused very much on the test itself, and took little notice of the effects it might have on the people ('stakeholders') involved with it. Messick (1989) changed this with a seminal paper which argued that tests could not be considered 'valid' or 'not valid' in a black and white manner by focusing only on test-internal factors; rather, one needed to argue for the validity of a test by considering a variety of factors: for what kind of examinee was the test suitable; what reasonable inferences could be derived from the scores?; how did the test method affect the scores?; what kind of positive or negative effect ('washback') might the test have on stakeholders? and many others. Now, tests are seen in the context of a complete assessment environment, which includes stakeholders (for example, examinees, raters, administrators, government officials), test conditions (for example, can everyone hear the tape recorder clearly), the intended use of the scores (for example, will they be used for relatively 'high-stakes' purposes (university admission) versus relatively 'low stakes' purposes (a classroom quiz)) and characteristics of the test itself (Are the instructions clear? What kind of tasks does the test employ?). Within this framework, tests are generally seen as being suitable for particular purposes and particular sets of learners, rather than 'one size fits all'. Since every classroom and group of learners is somewhat different, there has been a move towards exploring the value of alternative types of assessment which can be individualized to suit particular situations. These include structured observation, progress grids, portfolios, learning journals, project work, peer-assessment and self-assessment. (*See* Chapter 15, *Assessment*, for more on these issues.)

Technology was advancing throughout the century, but the advent of powerful and affordable personal computers probably has had the greatest impact on applied linguistics. Of course, language laboratories had utilized technology since the mid- to late-1940s, but the relatively recent development of very capable personal computers made quite sophisticated language programs available to the individual user, whether learner, teacher or researcher. Pedagogically, this opened the door to 'computer-assisted language learning' (CALL), where learners could work on individual computers truly at

their own pace. Computer technology has also facilitated the incorporation of audio and video input into learning programs on a scale previously unimaginable. The best of the current programs are starting to become interactive, tailoring their input and tasks to individual learners' progress, although it must be said that much remains to be done in this area. With new learning programs arriving regularly, today CALL is one of the more dynamic areas in applied linguistics.

Computing technology also made it possible to analyse large databases of language, called 'corpora'. Evidence from corpora have provided numerous insights into the workings of language (Egbert and Hanson-Smith, 1999; *see also* Chapter 6, *Corpus Linguistics*). Perhaps the most important revelation is the vast amount of lexical patterning which exists; in fact, it is so great that some scholars have suggested that it is more important than grammar in contributing to the organization of language (Sinclair, 1996). Corpora are now a key tool in lexicography, and have been consulted in the development of most current learner dictionaries. Evidence from corpora of spoken discourse has also highlighted the differences between spoken and written discourse (McCarthy and Carter, 1997). Happily, corpora have now made truly descriptive grammars possible, with writers having numerous authentic examples of many grammatical structures at their fingertips. The best studies in this area can even distinguish varying language usage between different registers, for example written fiction versus academic prose (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad and Finegan, 1999). It is likely that evidence from corpus linguistics will continue to have a major influence on applied linguistic thinking well into the new millennium.

Incorporating Social/Cultural and Contextual Elements into Applied Linguistics

Before the early part of the twentieth century, the mind and mental attributes such as language were largely studied as part of philosophy, but some scholars held a desire to study the mind independently of the philosophical paradigm. One way to break away from philosophy was to study the mind on a scientific basis, using empirical evidence. This led to the genesis of the modern field of psychology. Before this, the study of the mind and individual and the study of social influences were not separated. But Wundt (1877), in his early pioneering work, split psychology into two strands: a physiological psychology which concentrated on 'elementary' functions, such as sensory experience, and a 'higher' psychology which included processes such as 'deliberate remembering, reasoning, and language' (Cole, 1996: 28). This higher psychology necessarily included elements of human interaction and knowledge gained from society, and became known as 'Völkerpsychologie' ('social psychology'). The two strands were complementary; however, they required different research methods: the 'physiological' strand would largely rely on experimental research (often in the laboratory), whereas social psychology required 'descriptive' methods, such as ethnography and interview, which could capture the social elements.