A Course in Applied Linguistics

for Language Sciences and TEFL Master

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Description

The course of applied linguistics at the Master level is divided between lectures presented by the teacher and students' contributions in terms of research papers, presentations, books/articles reviews, etc. It is mainly based on the lectures below but will always remain open to the possibility of elaboration of certain items, introduction of extra materials (information, examples, tasks, readings, etc.) and adoption of other lectures as a response to the new advances in the areas of applied linguistics and foreign language teaching/learning without neglecting, of course, students' needs and expectations.

Objectives

Applied linguistics is introduced at this level to enlarge students' knowledge on the field of linguistics after having dealt with theoretical linguistics in their third-year of the Bachelor degree (and other branches of linguistics in previous years such as descriptive linguistics, general linguistics and microlinguistics). The course seeks to equip students with pertinent information about applied linguistics definitions, origins, foundations and scope. More important, a greater focus is placed on the contributions of applied linguistics to language education, particularly second or foreign language teaching/learning.

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Contents

Semester I

General Introduction: Branches of Linguistics

Introduction

Linguistics, which is commonly defined as the scientific study of language, is divided into a number of subfields according to the view that is adopted or the angle from which language study is approached. For instance, linguistics can offer the study of languages in general as well as that of a given language. It can trace the development of a language in history or just make an account of it at a given point in time. It can focus its investigation on language as a system in itself and for itself as it can study how language operates in relation to other variables. It can be approached as purely theoretical or as applied in a particular field. Accordingly, Lyons (1981) distinguishes the field of linguistics into general vs. descriptive, diachronic vs. synchronic, micro vs. macro, and theoretical vs. applied.

1. General vs. Descriptive Linguistics

The distinction between general and descriptive linguistics "corresponds to the distinction between studying language in general and describing particular languages" (Lyons, 1981, p. 34). This, however, does not imply that the two branches are completely unrelated. Lyons (1981) emphasizes that general and descriptive linguistics depend on each other. While the former provides concepts and categories for languages to be analyzed on their bases, the latter works to provide data to confirm or refute the proposed theories and assumptions. For instance, it might be put forward by general linguistics that all languages have nouns and verbs.

Descriptive linguistics may reject this hypothesis with empirical evidence that in some languages there is no distinction between verbs and nouns. In the process of hypothesis confirming or refuting, the descriptive linguist operates using concepts provided by the general linguist, in this case the concepts of 'verbs' and 'nouns'.

2. Diachronic vs. Synchronic Linguistics

The terms 'diachronic' and 'synchronic' have first been coined by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure in the early twentieth century as technical terms to stand for 'historical' and 'non-historical'. Diachronic has the literal meaning of *across-time* or what relates "to the changes in something, especially a language, that happen over time" (Diachronic, n.d.). Eventually, diachronic linguistics is the approach studying the change of languages over time (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). On the other hand, synchronic literally means *with-time* and generally relates to "a language at a particular point in time, without considering how it developed to that point" (Synchronic, n.d.). Synchronic linguistics therefore refers to the approach studying language at a particular period of time with no reference to its history or development. In other words, "in a synchronic approach to describing a language, we focus on that language at one moment in time and describe it as we find it at that moment" (Trask, 2007, p. 287). Lyons (1981) summarizes the diachronic-synchronic distinction of linguistics as follows:

> A diachronic description of a language traces the historical development of the language and records the changes that have taken place in it between successive points in time: 'diachronic' is equivalent, therefore, to 'historical'. A synchronic description of a language is non-historical: it presents an account of the language as it is at some particular point in time. (p. 35)

3. Microlinguistics vs. Macrolinguistics

Microlinguistics and macrolinguistics are terms given by Lyons (1981) to stand for the narrower and the broader scopes of linguistics respectively. In this regard, microlinguistics is devoted to the study of language structure without taking anything else into consideration. In short, it is the study of language system in itself and for itself. Macrolinguistics, on the other hand, is concerned with everything pertaining in any way at all to language use in the real world. Typical areas of microlinguistics investigation include the following[1]:

- **Phonetics:** the study of speech sounds and how they are articulated, transmitted, and received.

- **Phonology:** the branch of linguistics which studies the sound systems of languages. While phonetics is chiefly concerned with the physical nature of speech sounds, phonology deals with the ways in which sounds behave in languages.

- **Morphology:** the branch of linguistics which studies word structure. It is the study of morphemes, their different forms, and the ways they combine in word formation.

- **Syntax:** the branch of linguistics studying sentence structure. Syntax is concerned with the ways in which words combine to form sentences and the rules governing the formation of sentences.

- **Semantics:** the branch of linguistics interested in meaning. Semantics studies how meaning is structured, and investigates the relation between linguistic

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[1] Definitions adopted from Trask (2007) and Richards & Schmidt (2010).

expressions or words of a language and what they refer to in the real world (persons, things, events, etc.).

- **Pragmatics:** the study of language use in communication, particularly the relationships between sentences and the contexts in which they are used.

In macrolinguistics, interest is always placed on the study of language in relation to something in the real world, like 'sociolignuistics' which refers to the study of 'language' and 'society'. The following are some macrolinguistics areas of investigation as defined by Richards & Schmidt (2010):

- **Sociolinguistics:** the study of language in relation to social factors, that is social class, type and level of education, ethnic origin, etc.

- **Psycholinguistics:** the study of (a) the mental processes that a person uses in producing and understanding language, and (b) how humans learn language. Psycholinguistics includes the study of speech perception in addition to the role of memory, and other factors (social, psychological, etc.) in language use.

- **Neurolinguistics:** the study of the brain functions in language learning/use. Neurolinguistics includes research into how the structure of the brain influences language learning, how and in which parts of the brain language is stored, and how brain damage affects the ability to use language.

- **Discourse Analysis or Text Linguistics:** the study of how sentences in spoken and written language form larger meaningful units such as paragraphs, conversations, interviews, etc.

- **Forensic Linguistics:** a branch that investigates issues of language in relation to the law. Issues of concern include forensic identification (speaker identification in legal cases through handwriting analysis or speech analysis); interpretation for the police and courts; the semantics of legal terminology (e.g. the legal meanings of murder, manslaughter, homicide); the discourse of police interrogations and legal proceedings; etc.

- **Computational Linguistics:** the scientific study of language from a computational perspective. Computational linguists are interested in providing computational models of natural language processing (both production and comprehension) and various kinds of linguistic phenomena. The work of computational linguists is incorporated into such practical applications as speech recognition systems, speech synthesis, automated voice response systems, web search engines, text editors, and language instruction materials.

- **Anthropological Linguistics:** a branch of linguistics which studies the relationship between language and culture in a community, e.g., its traditions, beliefs, and family structure. Sometimes anthropological linguistics investigations interfere with sociolinguistics and the ethnography of communication.

- **Cognitive Linguistics:** an approach to linguistics which stresses the interaction between language and cognition focusing on language as an instrument for organizing, processing, and conveying information.

4. Theoretical vs. Applied Linguistics

Theoretical linguistics aims through studying language and languages to construct "a theory of their structure and functions . . . without regard to any practical applications that the investigation of language and languages might have" (Lyons, 1981, p. 35). Applied linguistics, on the other hand, entails the "study of language and linguistics in relation to practical problems" (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 29). Applied linguistics uses information from a variety of disciplines in addition to linguistics (for instance, sociology, anthropology and information theory) to first develop theoretical models regarding language and language use and then use them in practical areas.
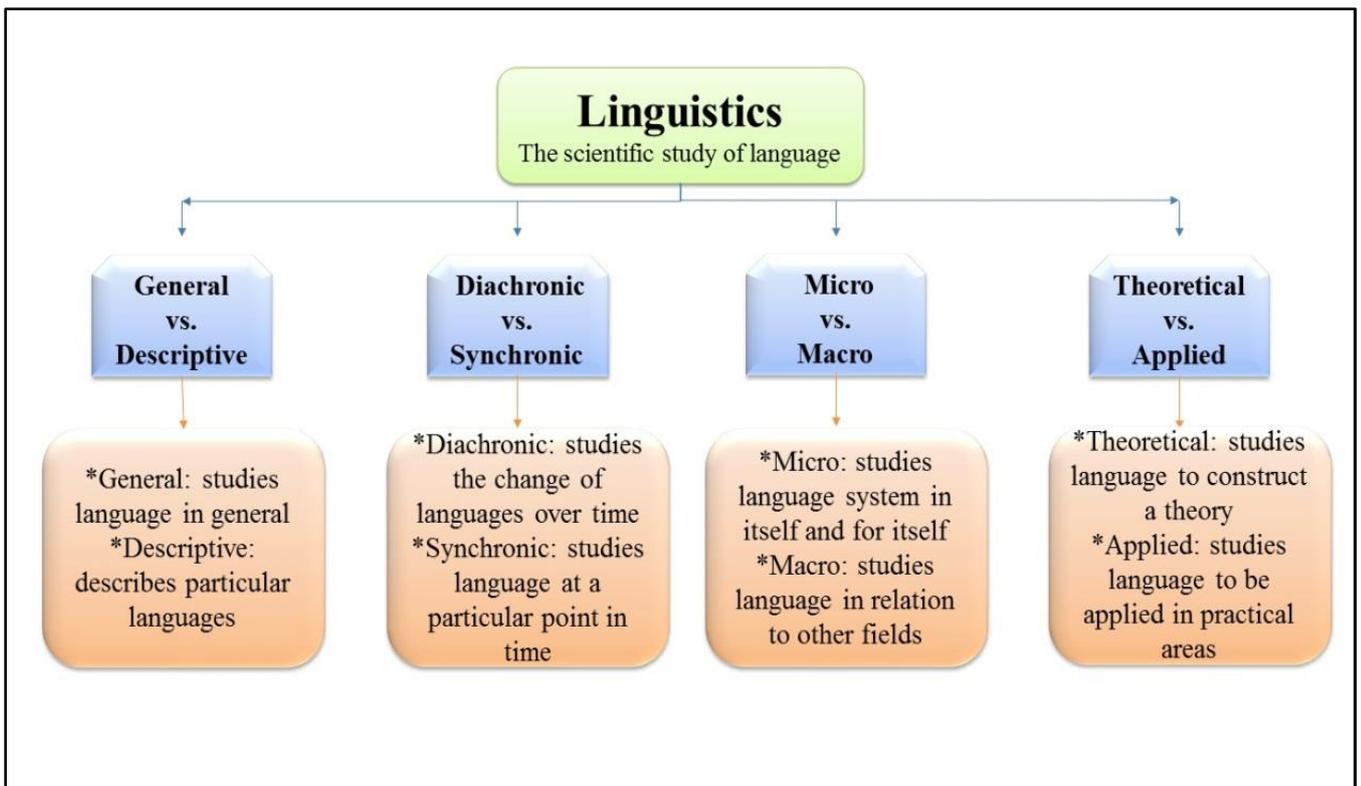
Putting it together

Figure 1 : Branches of Linguistics Summarized

Conclusion

In conclusion, it worth stressing that the aforementioned taxonomies may overlap. Applied linguistics, for instance, is commonly used as opposed to theoretical linguistics. Yet, in any applied linguistics practical investigation, there is always a theoretical model to start from. Some may consider applied linguistics a subfield of macrolinguistics, others see it the other way around. For diachronic, as in synchronic, interest can be placed on language in general (general linguistics) or on particular languages (descriptive linguistics) ending up with labels such as descriptive synchronic and general diachronic.

Assignment One

- Write a short composition to answer the following set of questions:

If we study the differences between classical Arabic poetry (for instance duing the pre-Islamic era) and modern poetry (twenty-first century), is it a diachronic or a synchronic linguistics investigation? Is it general or descriptive? And is it theoretical or applied?

Assignment Two

- Answer the following question in the form of a composition:

In what sense can the study of linguistics be useful to you? What is the importance of studying linguistics?

Assignment Three

- Are you familiar with other distinctions of linguistics? If yes, discuss them in relation to what you have studied.

Applied Linguistics Defined

In their everyday practice, professionals whose work involves language may find themselves in difficult or problematic situations with no evident standard measures to take. In the course of employing linguistics insights to find solutions to problems of language use in a diversity of contexts, one becomes involved in what is known as an 'applied linguistics' research.

According to the *International Association of Applied Linguistics* (AILA), applied linguistics "is an interdisciplinary field of research and practice dealing with practical problems of language and communication that can be identified, analysed or solved by applying available theories, methods and results of Linguistics." The *American Association for Applied Linguistics* (AAAL) maintains that the area of applied linguistics develops its own knowledge about language based on various disciplines, from humanities to social sciences, to address language-related issues and understand the roles for individuals and societies.

According to Widdowson (1984), the term applied linguistics implies that the "concern is with the use of findings from theoretical studies of language for the solution of problems of one sort or another arising in a different domain" (p. 7). Brumfit (1991), for instance, sees that applied linguistics main quest is to offer solutions to "real-world problems in which language is a central issue" (cited in McCarthy, 2001, p. 1). Groom and Littlemore (2011) describe applied linguistics as "a subject with a potentially very wide appeal" because it is "a highly accessible field of academic study [that] focus[s] on practical problems, questions and issues in which language plays a central role" (p. 1). For McCarthy, it is a 'problem-driven discipline' that makes recourse to the 'theory-driven discipline' of linguistics striving

for potential solutions. Similarly, Cook (2003) sustains that applied linguistics is the "academic discipline concerned with the relation of knowledge about language to decision making in the real world' (p. 5).

In the same vein, Schmitt and Celce-Muricia (2010) perceive the discipline as "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" (p. 1). Wilkins (1999) emphasizes that applied linguistics is about adding to our knowledge concerning the roles of language in human affairs to eventually provide "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" (cited in Schmitt & Celce-Muricia, 2010, p. 1). Hrehovcik (2005), for his part, defines applied linguistics as

> an interdisciplinary field of research for the study of all aspects of *language use*. Being a non-language-specific field, it primarily deals with mother, foreign and second language acquisition but also examines the relationship between language and such areas as the media, law, or communication. It draws on such well-established disciplines as linguistics, social and educational psychology, sociology, anthropology, and education. (Original emphasis, p. 217)

In short, applied linguistics is not an easy discipline to define. In Davies's (2007) words, it "does not lend itself to an easy definition" (p. 1); in Widdowson's (2000), it is devoid of a "stable definition" (p. 3). One of the reasons behind this is the wide scope applied linguistics sets for its investigation, as well as the growing and everyday expanding uses of language with all the problems this may lead to. It is generally viewed, though, as the subject that draws from linguistics, psychology,

sociology, education and so on to address language-related problems in the real world. Typically, any applied linguistics endeavour ends up with recommendations and suggestions for decision makers concerning the use of language in a given field.

The Need for and Scope of Applied Linguistics

Applied linguistics as a problem-driven area of investigation seeks to find to any of the following intricate situations:

1. A speech therapist sets out to investigate why a four-year-old child has failed to develop normal linguistics skills for a child of that age.

2. A teacher of English as a foreign language wonders why groups of learners sharing the same first language regularly make a particular grammatical mistake that learners from other language backgrounds do not.

3. An expert witness in a criminal case tries to solve the problem of who exactly instigated a crime, working only with statements made to the police.

4. An advertising copy writer searches for what would be the most effective use of language to target a particular social group in order to sell a product.

5. A mother-tongue teacher needs to know what potential employers consider important in terms of a school-leaver's ability to write reports or other business documents.

6. A literary scholar suspects that an anonymous work was in fact written by a very famous writer and looks for methods of investigating the hypothesis.

7. A group of civil servants are tasked with standardizing language usage in their country, or deciding major aspects of language planning policy that will affect millions of people (McCarthy, 2001, pp. 1-2).

The problems cited above are just examples of many others that fall within the scope of applied linguistics investigation. As it can be noticed, these problems are

not exclusive to language teaching and learning, but include other areas of interest where language is a central issue. Cook (2003) maintains that in order for decisions to be made, a number of questions and subsidiary questions are to be asked where their opposed answers should be considered. Examples of such questions, which are by no means different from McCarthy's (2001) 'situations', are presented as follows:

1. What language skills should children attain beyond basic literacy? (And what is basic literacy anyway? Reading and writing, or something more?)

2. Should children speaking a dialect be encouraged to maintain it or steered towards the standard form of a language? (And, if so, how is that standard form decided and by whom?)

3. Should the growth of English as the international lingua franca be welcomed or deplored?

4. In communities with more than one language which ones should be used in schools? (And does every child have a right to be educated in the language they use at home?)

5. Is it better for people to learn each other's languages or use translations? (And what is accurate or 'good' translation? Could it ever be done by computer?)

6. Should deaf children learn a sign language, or a combination of lip reading and speaking? (And are sign languages as complex as spoken ones?)

7. Which languages should be used in law courts and official documents?

8. Should everyone learn foreign languages and, if so, which one or ones? (And what is the best way to learn and teach them?) (Cook, 2003, p. 4).

In order to approach such problems and questions from an applied linguistics' perspective, the right theoretical framework needs to be located first. In other words, what theoretical aspect of language study (or linguistics branch) is the most relevant to my area of concern? Then, a number of other questions need to be asked for the appropriate methods to be selected. The following examples by McCarthy (2001) illustrate some potential linguistic questions for the solution of two different problematic situations: one related to teaching a target language's grammar, the other to dictionary making.

Example 1:

- A teacher trying to understand why learners from the same background are having difficulty with a particular grammatical structure in English.

Language teachers' questions

What is known about the learner's first language or any other language they know which might be interfering with their learning of the foreign language?

What do grammarians say about this structure?

What psychological barriers might be preventing the learning of the structure?

Are some structures difficult to learn if they are tackled too early on? Is there an order in which structures are best presented?
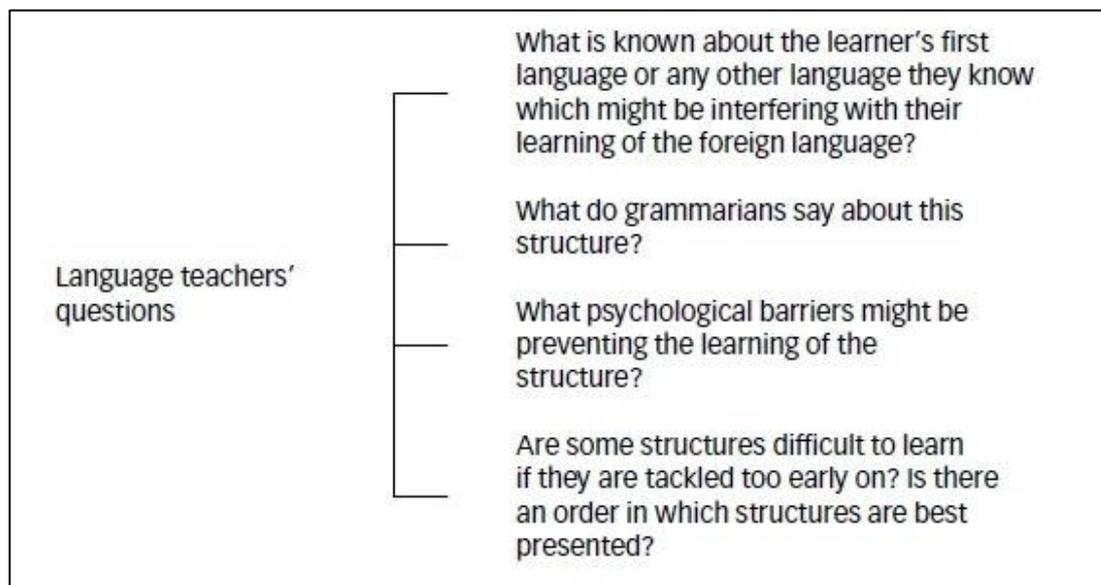
Figure 2: Potential linguistic questions for the solution of a grammatical problem

(McCarthy, 2001, p. 8)

Example 2:

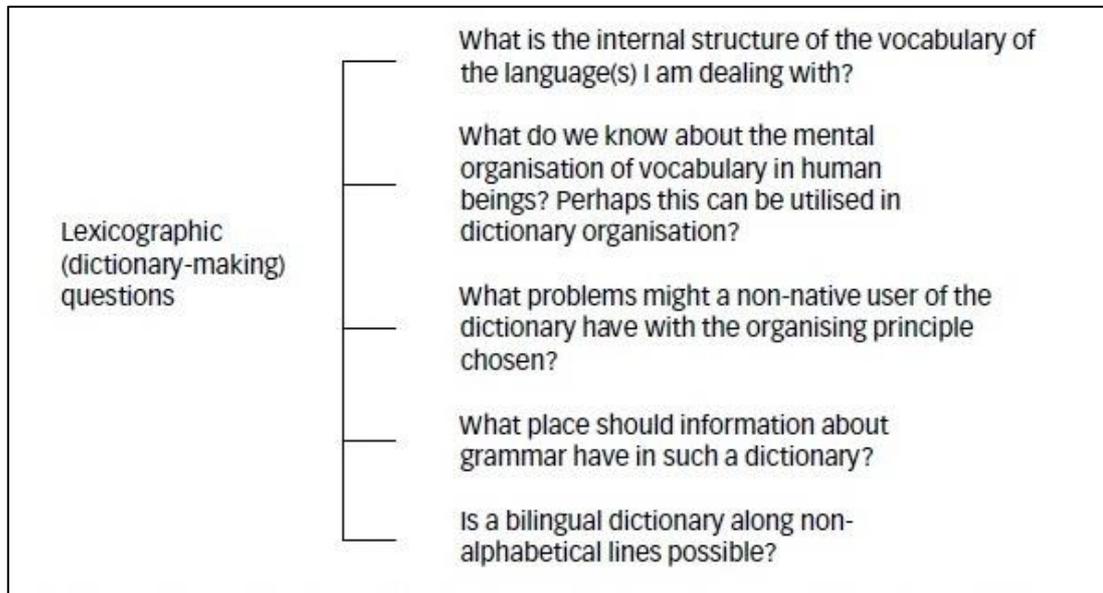- A dictionary writer looking for alternatives to the alphabetical dictionary.

Figure 3 : Potential linguistic questions for the solution of a lexicographic problem

(McCarthy, 2001, p. 8)

Though applied linguistics is "still a comparatively young subject" and establishing some boundaries of it is a difficult task (Groom & Littlemore, 2011, p. 7), some attempts have been made to identify an evident and independent scope for the discipline. Based on McCarthy's situations or problems and Cook's questions, the scope of applied linguistics can be narrowed down to a number of areas, namely language and education; language, work and law; in addition to language, information and effect.

(i) *Language and education*

- **First language education:** the study of one's home language or languages

- **Additional language education:** generally divided into second and foreign language education. In second language education, one studies a society's majority or official language which is not a home language. In a foreign language education, the language studied is of another country.

- **Clinical linguistics:** the application of linguistic sciences and theories to the study of language disabilities and speech pathologies.

- **Language testing:** the assessment of the achievement and proficiency in both first and additional languages.

(ii) *Language, work and law*

- **Workplace communication:** the study of the power and use of language in the workplace.

- **Language planning:** the process of making decisions about the way language is used officially in a given country and what language or languages are used in educational and other institutions.

- **Forensic linguistics:** the application of linguistics research and methods to the law and criminal investigations.

(iii) *Language, information and effect*

- **Literary stylistics:** the analysis of linguistic choices and their effects in literature.

- **Critical discourse analysis:** studies the relationship between linguistic choices and their effects in persuasive uses of language. It investigates how language is used and analyzes texts and other discourse types in order to identify the ideology and values underlying them.

- **Translation and interpretation:** on the surface, the difference between interpreting and translation is the mode of expression. Interpreters deal with spoken language and translate orally, while translators deal with written text, transforming the source text into a comprehensible and equivalent target text.

- **Information design: it** has to do with the arrangement and presentation of written language. It is the practice of presenting information in a way that foresters efficient and effective understanding (e.g. advertisements, technical documentation, websites, product user interfaces, etc.).

- **Lexicography:** designing monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, and other language reference works such as thesauri (Cook, 2003, pp. 7-8).

Groom and Littlemore (2011) for their part discuss a number of topics that applied linguistics has addressed since its early beginnings. The coming lines illustrate applied linguistics' scope according Groom and Littlemore (2011) which have many areas in common with Cook's (2003) taxonomy.

1. **Language teaching methodology**: applied linguistics seeks to uncover the best teaching methods and techniques using classroom research.

2. **Syllabus and materials design**: researchers in this field are concerned with the order and the way in which learning material is presented to learners. Research in this area is also interested in what type of syllabus to be adopted

depending on one's understanding of how language is structured and how it is learned.

3. **Language testing**: it is an important area of research into language teaching and learning where focus is placed on how learners' ability is assessed.

4. **Language for specific purposes**: it examines the characteristics of the different types of language with a view of how to teach learners/discourse communities to use these specific types in everyday communicative situations.

5. **Second language acquisition**: areas of interest here make for instance whether or not there is a natural constant order of acquisition across all language learning situations; the extent to which the acquisition of a second language resemble that of a first language; how language is organized in the minds of those who speak more than one language; etc.

6. **Language policy and planning**: the way language is controlled at international, national and local levels; the role of official languages in national identity; and what language(s) should be used as vehicle(s) of instruction at schools make examples of research interests for language planners and policy makers.

7. **Forensic linguistics**: it studies the relationship between language and the law, i.e., it looks at the use of language in the legal process like in the discourse of police, judges and lawyers as well as in courtroom discourse and legal documents.

8. **Sociolinguistics and critical discourse analysis**: sociolinguistics investigates the relationship between language and society through variables

such as accent, dialect and gender. Critical discourse analysts, on the other hand, adopt an explicitly political stance towards the analysis of that language-society relationship hoping to ameliorate social inequality and promote social justice.

9. **Translation studies**: as one of the topics that fall under the general rubric of applied linguistics, translation studies focus on the choices that people make when translating from one language to the other. These choices may vary between achieving loyalty to the original text and achieving naturalness in the target language.

10. **Lexicography**: research in lexicography, as the practice of compiling dictionaries, is focused on helping lexicographers in making decisions and on the look-up strategies deployed by dictionary users while consulting them (Groom & Littlemore, 2011, pp. 15-24).

Linguistics and Applied Linguistics

For applied linguistics to approach 'real-world problems in which language is a central issue', those problems must be related to relevant linguistics literature. Therefore, one way of looking at the linguistics-applied linguistics relationship is the first being that academic discipline interested in studying generalities of language and looking for abstract idealization, and the second as the practical discipline that bases on that theoretical knowledge to address language-related problems as experienced in the real world (Cook, 2003). This considered, it sounds like applied linguistics is a branch of linguistics, or at best a dependent area of study that is powerless and ineffective on its own.

It is true that linguistics is probably the nearest neighbor of applied linguistics and its main source of inspiration; however, applied linguists may find their quests in other disciplines without drawing on linguistics at all (Groom & Littlemore, 2011). Furthermore, applied linguistics may end up with it is own theories when no possible relation could be made between linguistics theories and the needs of people involved in the problem itself (Cook, 2003).

Eventually, applied linguistics uses but has never been completely dependent on linguistics theory as it can extend it, develop alternatives to it and even challenge dominant ideas within it. Groom and Littlemore (2011) summarize that relationship as follows:

> although applied linguistics enjoys a strong and productive working relationship with linguistics … [it] is not a branch of linguistics, or of any other academic discipline, for that matter. It is an academic subject area in its own right, with its own set of

concerns, its own academic journals, its own professional associations, its own academic qualifications, and its own professional pathways. (p. 7)

Semester II

Applied Linguistics and Language Teaching: An Overview

The concept of "applied linguistics" as we know it today was first used in the United States in 1941 as the name of a course in the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan which was based on applying a "scientific approach" to teaching foreign languages. The work of Charles Fries and Robert Lado on contrastive linguistics – two closely linked names to the inception of the field – resulted in the journal of *Language Learning: A quarterly Journal of Applied Linguistics* in 1948. In the 1950s and 1960s, other journals in the filed have emerged along with associations like the *International Association for Applied Linguistics*.

After the Second World War, the growth of the language teaching profession was faced by the lack of knowledge about language and how to teach language for teachers, trainers and supervisors of teachers. This was applied linguistics challenge back then (Davies, 2007). In the 1970s, contrastive linguistics and the psychology of second language learning were the trend in applied linguistics. People were interested at that time in comparing and contrasting learners' first and target languages, as well as understanding the processes of acquisition and learning to facilitate the process of additional language learning.

Therefore, it is fair to say that the emergence of applied linguistics was mainly motivated by deficiencies in the practice of foreign language teaching and learning. A discipline like applied linguistics was necessary to go hand in hand with the rapidly growing area of language teaching and learning in order to bridge the gap between theoretical findings of linguistics and the pedagogical practices of the

classroom. Widdowson (1979) explains in this regard: "applied linguistics, as I conceive of it, is a spectrum of inquiry which extends from theoretical studies of language to classroom practice" (p. 1). B. Spolsky once suggested the term "educational linguistics" rather "applied linguistics" (cited in Scmitz, 2010). Furthermore, Widdowson (1984) holds that applied linguistics is "an area of enquiry bearing on the techniques of language teaching" where the main business "should be the establishing of appropriate concepts or models of language in the pedagogic domain" (p. 6).

In fact, language teaching and learning, especially the learning and teaching of foreign languages "have always been universally recognised as central to the concerns of applied linguistics. Indeed, for many people, applied linguistics is the academic study of second language learning and teaching" (Groom & Littlemore, 2011, pp. 7-8). Today with the expansion of the discipline's scope to include other areas, typical aspects of language education that are still centrally important applied linguistics activities include curriculum, syllabus and materials design/evaluation; classroom management; teaching the four skills; language testing and learners' assessment; teacher education; etc.

To sum up, applied linguistics was once focused narrowly on foreign language teaching/learning before undergoing a process of rapid expansion of scope to become the discipline that covers a wide range of practical and theoretical concerns as far as language use in the real world is concerned. However, foreign language pedagogy "remains by far the largest area of research activity in contemporary applied linguistics, and this is likely to remain the case for the foreseeable future" (Groom & Littlemore, 2011, p. 14).

Applied Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition:
Contrastive Linguistics

Introduction

By far, second language acquisition is one of the very pertinent areas for applied linguistics investigations. "Traditionally, the primary concern of applied linguistics has been second language acquisition theory, second language pedagogy and the interface between the two" (Schmitt, & Celce-Muricia, 2010, p. 2). In the early 1970s, contrastive linguistics was considered the most efficient approach to facilitate the process of second language education. Therefore, a number of sub-disciplines have emerged under the umbrella of contrastive linguistics which still until today contribute to our understanding of the process of second language acquisition, and provide us with knowledge to enhance the practice of additional language education.

1. Contrastive Analysis

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (henceforth CAH) came to existence when structural linguistics and behavioural psychology were very influential in the sixties as regards language teaching/learning. "Structuralism assumes that there is finite structure of a given language that can be documented and compared with another language" (Yang, 1992, p. 134). On the other hand, language under behaviourism in viewed as a system of habits where learning proceeds by producing a response to a stimulus and receiving either positive or negative reinforcement. As a consequence; while learning an additional language, the first language habits will

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interfere in the process and the focus of teaching should be on where the first and target languages differ.

The CAH originated from Lado's (1957) *Linguistics across cultures* where he made one of the strongest claims of the hypothesis: "we can predict and describe the patterns that will cause difficulty in learning, and those that will not cause difficulty, by comparing systematically the language and culture to be learned with the native language and culture of the student" (Lado, 1957: vii). He adds:

> In the comparison between native and foreign languages lies the
> key to ease or difficulty in foreign language learning….We assume
> that the student who comes in contact with a foreign language will
> find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult.
> Those elements that are similar to his native language will be easy
> for him and those elements that are different will be difficult. (pp.
> 1-2)

Contrastive analysis (henceforth CA) entails the examination of similarities and differences between languages seeking to provide material for applied disciplines (such as translation or TEFL) as well as predicting possible areas of difficulty and error for second/foreign language learners. The analysis and comparison of languages entailed by contrastive analysis takes place at different levels (phonology, morphology, syntax, lexis, etc.). Focus is always placed on areas of difference -which equals difficulty- to provide solutions for second/foreign language learning problems and adopt adequate instructional contents (Johansson, 2000). According to Fries (1945), the most efficient materials for teaching are based on a systematic analysis of the target language features and comparing them to those of the first language. The three main assumptions underlying the strong version of contrastive analysis could be summed up as follows:

a) The main difficulties in learning a new language are caused by interference from the first language,

b) These difficulties can be predicted by contrastive analysis,

c) Teaching materials can make use of contrastive analysis to reduce the effects of interference (Richards and Schmidt, 2002, p. 119).

The premise of contrastive analysis is simple: through the process of learning an additional language, learners will unavoidably make recourse to their first language. If the two languages are similar, learning becomes easier or what is known as 'positive transfer' takes place; if they are different, transfer will occur negatively. Furthermore, it is believed that "the greater the difference between them, the more difficult they would be to acquire, whereas the more similar, the easier they would be to learn" (Lightbound, 2005, p. 66). At the operational level, contrastive analysis goes through four main steps:

1) writing formal descriptions of the two languages, L1 and L2

2) picking forms from the descriptions for contrast,

3) making a contrast of the forms chosen, and

4) making a prediction of difficulty through the contrast.

Though contrastive analysis has achieved a great success in explaining language learners' difficulties, it has been subject to criticism regarding its foundations, assumptions and procedures. What comes is a summary of the main criticism addressed to contrastive analysis.

- The foundation of the CAH itself, behaviourism, was criticized. Language is not a collection of reinforced habits. Children learning an L1 may very often use the language creatively, not merely reproduce what they have heard. Eventually, they come up with producing and understanding things they have never heard before. Evidence of internalized rules is shown in the production of forms like *He goed. Similarly, second language learners do a lot of the same things (e.g., over-regularization of forms, like He comed).

- Many errors that second language learners make cannot be traced to influence of their L1.

- Transfer of habits or transfer from the first language does not seem to be consistent across languages. For instance, Zobl (1980) has found out that French learners of English failed to show evidence of a predicted error, but English learners of French did. In French, object pronouns generally come before the verb: *Je les vois* 'I see them (lit. I them see)'. In English object pronouns come after the verb: *I see them*. French learners of English never produced *I them see*; however, English learners of French did produce things like **Je vois elle* ('I see her' cf. *Je la vois*).

2. Error Analysis

Error analysis (henceforth EA) was developed in the 1960s to provide an alternative to CA in transfer research as the latter started to decline. Unlike CA which tries to predict learners' difficulty in learning an additional language based on how it is different from the first language, EA investigates their errors after being committed and considers them not only as an important, but also as a necessary part of language learning. According to Khansir (2012), EA emerged "to reveal that

learner errors were not only because of the learner's native language but also they reflected some universal strategies" (p. 1027).

Contrastive analysis considers interference from the first language as the major cause of errors. Error analysis, on the other hand, identifies other complex factors affecting the learning process and leading to some errors which are not due to negative transfer such as the target language itself, the communicative strategies used as well as the type and quality of instruction. Richards and Schmidt (2002) classify the errors encountered by second language learners into seven categories as follows:

1. *Overgeneralizations*: errors caused by extension of target language rules to inappropriate contexts.

2. *Simplifications*: errors resulting from learners producing simpler linguistic rules than those found in the target language.

3. *Developmental errors*: those reflecting natural stages of development.

4. *Communication-based errors*: errors resulting from strategies of communication.

5. *Induced errors*: those resulting from transfer of training.

6. *Errors of avoidance*: resulting from failure to use certain target language structures because they are thought to be too difficult.

7. *Errors of overproduction*: structures being used too frequently (Richards and Schmidt, 2002: 185).

3. Interlanguage Analysis

The term "interlanguage" was originally proposed by Selinker (1972) who defines it as "a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from a learner's attempted production of a TL norm" (p. 214). Interlanguage analysis is based on the principle that during the process of learning a second or a foreign language, learners might develop a system for themselves which is to some extent different from their first and target languages, but based on them at the same time.

In a related matter, Hakuta and Cancino (1977) maintain that "an interlanguage incorporates characteristics of both the native and the target language of the learner" (p. 297). This interlanguage, even if it takes place before the learner attains a good proficiency level in the target language, consists of a set of systematic rules that can be understood and described. Therefore, interlanguage analysis implies a continuum analysis of language learners' linguistic development with reference to L1 and L2 linguistic systems and the transitional competence of second language learners (Connor, 1996).

4. Contrastive Rhetoric

Contrastive rhetoric is an area of research that studies discourse differences between different languages and cultures as reflected in the writing of second/foreign language students (Xing et. al., 2008). The emergence of this field of study is attributed to the work of one man, the American applied linguist Robert Kaplan. Since Kaplan's (1966) seminal study, the field of contrastive rhetoric has come a long way from the analysis of international students' paragraphs in the late 1960s to the intercultural discipline it is today.

Kaplan based his work on the assumption that logic and rhetoric are interdependent and culture specific as well. Accordingly, different cultures impose different perspectives of the world, and different languages have different rhetorical patterns. In relation to this, Kaplan (1966) illustrates:

> Logic (in the popular, rather than the logician's sense of the word), which is the basis of rhetoric, is evolved out of a culture; it is not universal. Rhetoric, then, is not universal either, but varies from culture to culture and even from time to time within a given culture. It is affected by canons of taste within a given culture a given time. (p. 2)

Connor (1996) maintains that each language has its unique rhetorical conventions and that some of those conventions interfere in foreign language writing. Even if they use the correct grammar and the relevant vocabulary, non-native students' target language writing exhibits foreign-sounding structures that belong to the first language where many of their "sentences make more sense in the students' native language than in English…" (Bennui, 2008, p. 73). This weirdness in students' foreign language composition could be attributed to their unawareness of the target audience perceptions and expectations, as well as the organizational modes and the sociocultural context of their target language writing since "conventions of written discourse are shaped by culture, and thus differ cross-culturally…every culture defines its 'genres' by specifying their form, content, language, audience in a way that is not necessarily shared by other cultures" (Merrouche, 2006, p. 193).

Kaplan's (1966) article "*Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural Education*" was the first in an ESL setting that was devoted to the study of rhetorics in writing, thus, extending the analysis beyond the sentence level. Kaplan's (1966)

pioneering study analyzed the organization of paragraphs in ESL students' essays and indicated that L1 rhetorical structures were evident in thir L2 writing. Starting from a holistic analysis of more than 500 international students' English essays and on the basis of Aristotelian rhetoric and logic, Kaplan (1966) identified five types of paragraph development each reflecting different rhetorical tendencies and came to the conclusion that: "each language and each culture has a paragraph order unique to itself, and that part of the learning of the particular language is the mastering of its logical system" (p. 14). The five original paragraph development types are described by Connor (2002) as follows:

> Anglo-European expository essays are developed linearly whereas essays in Semitic languages use parallel coordinate clauses; those in Oriental languages prefer an indirect approach, coming to the point in the end; and those in Romance languages and in Russian include material that, from a linear point of view, is irrelevant. (p. 494)

Contrastive rhetoric emerged in the first place as a result to the growing number of international students enrolling in American universities which made American writing teachers and researchers interested in the distinct rhetorical styles exhibited in the writing of non-native students. Therefore; in orientation, contrastive rhetoric is fundamentally pedagogical and has "a significant impact on the teaching of writing in both ESL and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes" (Connor et al., 2008, p. 1).

Contrastive rhetoric, asserts Connor (1996), was originally developed to identify problems faced by non-native learners and try to explain them. It attempts to provide teachers and students with knowledge of the language-culture relationship

and how written products by language learners reflect their discourse textual features and patterns of organization. However; According to Wang (2006), when reviewing his original study, Kaplan found that contrastive rhetoric can offer more than the analysis of rhetorical differences between languages. It can provide a cultural understanding as well as the right mechanisms that help students overcome their difficulties and produce effective L2 texts. Moreover, he acknowledged that its aim goes beyond pedagogy "to describe ways in which written texts operate in larger cultural contexts" (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996; cited in Wang, 2006, p. 22).

After being limited in its early years of development to the study of students' essays, today after the increase in the types of written texts within second/foreign language education around the world, contrastive rhetoric's field of study has expanded to include writing in many EAP/ESP situations and continues to contribute in understanding cultural differences and in the teaching of ESL/EFL writing. Other important genres relevant to contrastive rhetoric field of study are the academic research articles, research reports and proposals in addition to writing for professional purposes, such as business.

In 2004 and after reviewing the goals, methods and achievements of research in contrastive rhetoric; Connor (2004) suggested a new umbrella term to stand for the contemporary scope of cultural influences in second/foreign language writing. The term "intercultural rhetoric" was proposed by Connor after she came to realize the dynamic nature of writing and culture, and how writing in a given culture is closely attached to the intellectual history and the social structures of that specific culture. Connor (2004) points out:

> Changing definitions of written discourse analysis – from text-based to context sensitive – and of culture – from static to dynamic – contribute to the changing focus of intercultural rhetoric research, a new term that better reflects the dynamic nature of the area of study. (p. 302)

The concept "intercultural rhetoric" came out to include cross-cultural studies as well as the interactive situations in which writers with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds negotiate L2 writing for varied purposes (Connor, 2008). Suggesting the term intercultural rhetoric instead of contrastive rhetoric was because the examination of differences between languages done by the latter is most likely to demonstrate one's language as inferior to another language (U. Connor, personal communication, May, 2005). Intercultural, on the other hand, emphasizes that international communication (speaking or writing) requires both parties to be involved, where the accommodation to each other's styles is necessary and goes both ways (ibid.). Intercultural rhetoric is a better term because it shifts attention from the pure contrast and possible stereotyping and encourages the examination of communication in action by studying how texts are created and how they are consumed i.e., focusing "on the social contexts of discourse" as well as the "processes that lead to the products" (Connor, 2004, p. 292).

Conclusion

Contrastive analysis, error analysis and interlanguage analysis rely in their inquiry on the structural approach of linguistic study. They operate through classifying utterances at their different linguistic levels regarding phonology, syntax, morphology and semantics. Contrastive rhetoric, on the other hand, compares

discourse structures across cultures and genres to improve research in second/foreign language writing and to promote students' consciousness of the native culture/language and their effects on the target language composition.

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