

APPLIED LINGUISTICS: ITS MEANING AND USE

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Abstract

This paper explains what applied linguistics is and its functions in various contexts. This brings out an attempt to familiarize with certain techniques useful for language teaching. One can easily understand what applied Linguistics is: how it is applied following theory of language and description of language; how it is related to language learning based on the concept of language learning and language analysis and how it is concerned in language teaching which clearly points out the reason for mistake only because of the confusion with the native language.

Finally, the present paper exhibits how it is useful to teacher. When the teacher applies this method s/he must be clear. Instead of having conciseness he can give more examples than definitions. In-service training is suggested to teachers with regard to Applied Linguistics and its applications.

Key Words: *Applied Linguistics, theoretical linguistics, hypotheses, school of language theory, completeness of grammar, communication.*

Applied Linguistics is an inter-disciplinary field as it draws upon related fields like psychology, sociology, pedagogy and linguistics in dealing with problems of language teaching /learning. The field is practical in nature. Pit Corder, a famous grammarian, proposes a clean formulation of the difference between applied or practical linguistics and theoretical linguistics.

The application of linguistics knowledge to some object of applied linguistics as its name implies is an activity. It is not a theoretical study. But it makes use of the finding of theoretical studies. The applied linguistics is a consumer, or user, not a producer, of theories. Therefore, applied and theoretical linguistics are interrelated and interdependent. Applied linguistics provides reinforcement and confirmation of the hypotheses generated by theorists as they apply them to various practical situations.

The creation of applied linguistics as a discipline represents an effort to find practical application for modern scientific linguistics. While assuming that linguistics can be an applied science it brings together such diverse activities as the making of alphabets by missionaries and the making of translations by machines. The use of the term has now become crystallized in the names of language centres, reviews, books and articles.

There are two ways of applications in linguistics: one is a theory of languages; the second is a description of language. There are dozens of different theories of languages, several of which are mutually contradictory. Some of these constitute school of language theory, like the Sassurian School, the Psychomechanic School, the Gossematic School, the Bloomfieldian school, the Prague school, the Firthian school and others.

The theories which have been applied are not necessarily the most applicable. On the other hand, the fact that applicable theory has never been applied to language teaching. It does not mean that it cannot be. If it is description of a language that is being applied it might include all of its phonetics, grammar or vocabulary.

Descriptions differ in their purpose, extent and presentation. Some descriptions aim at being concise; others at being extensive. Some analyze the language by breaking it down; others by building it up. Some are made as if the language described is unknown to the linguist; other as if it were already known to the reader. Some will present the language in two levels: grammar and phonology; others are as many as fourteen.

Some descriptions are based on written works while others are on speech. Some may cover all areas in which the languages are spoken; others may be limited in single unit. Some may be compiled from the speech of a single person over the period of a few weeks; others may be based on the writing of many authors covering a few centuries. So it is obvious that the problem of the language teacher is not only where and when to apply linguistics, but whose linguistics to apply, and what sort.

For language existence, that language must have been learned and practiced but in order to be learned a language should not be analyzed. For the process of learning a language is quite different from the process of analyzing one.

Persons who have never gone to school find it difficult to divide their language into such classes as the parts of speech. But the fact that they may speak their native language with a great deal of fluency and elegance. Foreign languages have also been successfully mastered without analysis. Linguists analyze the methods of language learning. Therefore, language learning cannot be the purpose of linguistics pure or applied. Applied linguistics is not language learning.

In the use of applied linguistic in language teaching, it has been assumed that if one is able to make a thorough description of the forms of a language, the same is able to teach it. But such assumptions are found failure because even outstanding language teachers will fail to do it without knowledge of linguistics. Some linguists are more interested in finding an application for their science than solving the problems of language teaching.

As a principle of "applied linguistics" all the mistakes of the language learner are due to the makeup of his native languages. This is demonstrably false. Many mistakes actually made have no parallel in the native language. Still other mistakes are due to the habit, which language learners soon acquire, of avoiding the similarities with their language.

Most of the available differential descriptions are so superficial and incomplete as to be misleading this is because there are at best based on a unit-by-unit and structure-by-structure comparison of two languages.

For language teacher, the completeness of grammar is more relevant than its scientific consistency; clarity is more important than conciseness; examples are more useful than definitions. The fact is that most of the new "linguistically approved" "grammar being

applied to language teaching is more difficult to use. Some are no more than undigested research essays on the making of a grammar. Other represents a sort of do-it-yourself, grammar-making kit allegedly designed to “crack the code” of any language in the world.

Some training in practical linguistics will enable him what he has to deal with. It can also help him understand, evaluate and use some of the description of the language. Since our aim in teaching a second language is not simply the teaching of rules of grammar but to enable the learner to use the language in communication.