LINGUISTICS IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT. This paper looks at some of the underlying reasons which might explain the uncertainty surrounding applied linguistics as an academic enquiry. The opening section traces the emergence of the field through its professional associations and publications and identifies second and foreign language (L2) teaching as its primary activity. The succeeding section examines the extent to which L2 pedagogy, as a branch of applied linguistics, is conceived within a theoretical linguistic framework and how this might have changed during a historical period that gave rise to Chomskyan linguistics and the notion of communicative competence. The concluding remarks offer explanations to account for the persistence of linguistic parameters to define applied linguistics.

1. INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the most difficult challenge facing the discipline of applied linguistics at the start of the new millennium is to define the ground on which it plies its trade. The field is not infrequently criticised and derided by the parent science, linguistics, which claims authority over academic terrain that applied linguists consider their own. It should be said, however, that applied linguists themselves seem to attract such adversity because of the lack of consensus within their own ranks about what it is they are actually engaged in. The elusiveness of a definition that might string together an academic domain of such wide-ranging diversity, which appears to be in a perennial state of expansion, makes definitions unsafe, not to say time-bound, and in this sense Widdowson's (2000a: 3) likening of the field to "the Holy Roman Empire: a kind of convenient nominal fiction" is uncomfortably close to the

truth. Indeed, a geographical metaphor which alludes to the merging together of the numerous scattered principalities of modern-day Germany both freeze-frames a discipline in the early stages of its development and embraces the paradox of an enquiry that extends out in all directions without leaving behind the sort of trace that might serve to delimit its investigative boundaries.

There is a sense of inevitability about this state of affairs in that, like all applied sciences, applied linguistics "begins from local and quite practical problems" (Candlin 1988: vii) so that the point of reference is continually changing. If one accepts the notion that practice precedes theory in applied linguistics –and thus by extension determines theory– then one may also appreciate how context, as defined by time and locality, is likely to describe an academic discipline which is characterised by its very dynamism. "Uncertainty", as Widdowson (2000a: 3) suggests, may be one of the reasons why "applied linguistics has flourished" but the central issue at stake in defining the field would seem to be more closely connected with "directionality" (Widdowson 1980: 169). The practice-before-theory paradigm might, for many applied linguists, describe the central plank upon which the discipline is built although the antithesis of this approach, theory-before-practice, has just as often been used to solve applied linguistic problems (de Beaugrande 1997: 310).

This paper attempts to shed some light on why the field of applied linguistics continues to generate doubt and misgiving as an academic enquiry. The first part looks at the emergence of the discipline through the formation of its associations and publications and identifies the practical area of second and foreign language (L2) teaching as being the principal focus of research activity in the field. The second part examines how theoretical linguistics has come to form a point of departure in defining L2 pedagogy[1] and the extent to which this might have changed specifically with the advent of Chomskyan theory and the subsequent development of the notion of *communicative competence*.

2. THE EMERGENCE OF A DISCIPLINE

The development of applied linguistics as an academic enquiry can be traced back to the middle of the last century with the emergence of a number of research institutions and university departments. Examples of these include

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1. The enormous impact of other academic disciplines on L2 pedagogy, notably second language acquisition (SLA), is fully acknowledged. Nevertheless, the complexity of the field of SLA might be dealt with more profitably in a separate article, and will not, therefore, be considered here. The term *L2 pedagogy* (and indeed, *L2 teaching*) is used in its broadest sense to include learning as well as teaching in a classroom context.

the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan in 1941, the Department of Applied Linguistics at the University of Edinburgh in 1956, the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, DC in 1959, the formation of AILA (Association Internationale de Linguistique Appliquée) in 1964, TESOL (Teaching English as a Second and Overseas Language) in 1966, BAAL (the British Association of Applied Linguistics) in 1968, and AAAL (The American Association of Applied Linguistics) in 1977.

The publication of journals related to the study, which have developed in parallel to its institutional bodies, also have a good deal to do with the promotion of applied linguistics. The first of these was the *Modern Language Journal* which came into being in 1916 and, at about the time when the field was attracting attention at an institutional level, a number of other journals appeared: *English Language Teaching Journal* (1946), *Language Learning* (1948), *International Review of Applied Linguistics* (IRAL 1963), *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* (1963), *TESOL Quarterly* (1966). And by the late 1970s and early 1980s: *System* (1973), *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* (1978), *Applied Linguistics* (1980), *Applied Psycholinguistics* (1980), *English for Specific Purposes* (1981).

A cursory examination of the stated aims and objectives of the various applied linguistic assocations, institutions and publications is a useful point of departure in search of an answer to the question posed in the title of this paper, namely what is applied linguistics? Clearly the institutional bodies and journals referred to above comprise only a small part of two potentially extensive lists although, given that they are based on Allwright (1998: 10-11), with the exception of one or two additional items, they may be taken to be minimally representative of the field at least from an international standpoint.

The Internet-accessible information and documentation pertaining to AILA, BAAL and AAAL –three of the largest applied linguistic associations worldwide– seem to coincide on three issues which are central to a definition of the field. In the first place, it is evident that linguistics is fundamental. As Widdowson (2000a: 4) observes, "you have to have it first before you can apply it." BAAL (2002) sees applied linguistics as "an approach to understanding *language* issues in the real word"; whilst AILA and AAAL refer to "*language-related* topics" and "*language-related* concerns" (my italics) respectively which the latter goes on to specify as: "language education, language acquisition and loss, bilingualism, discourse analysis, literacy, rhetoric and stylistics, language for special purposes, psycholinguistics, second and foreign language pedagogy, language assessment, and language policy and planning."

Secondly, it is clear that these language-related topics and concerns are grounded in real world problems and issues. They are, in this sense, a distant remove from the theoretical abstractions of 'pure' or 'scientific' linguistics.

Indeed, the two-item definition of applied linguistics offered by BAAL (1994) includes "an approach to understanding language issues in the real world, drawing on theory and empirical analysis." AAAL (2002) is more specific about the nature of its work in listing one of its primary activities as "to network with Teachers of English for Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)." Curiously, though AILA came into existence with a mandate "to encourage the spread and improvement of language teaching on an international scale" (Strevens 1966: 63), its statutes and bylaws appear to reduce the practical application of its research to a list of twenty areas which includes "first and second language education" (AILA 2002). Thus, the field of language teaching, which is clearly seen as a principal application of applied linguistics in AAAL, is not accorded the same importance in current AILA and BAAL documents.

Finally, all three associations supply lengthy lists of subdisciplines, topics and scientific commissions which underline the "multidisciplinary" and "inter-disciplinary" nature of applied linguistics. And although the actual names of these research areas may vary from list to list and from association to association, the ground covered by each one describes what is essentially the same academic terrain.

This threefold pattern of i) linguistics; ii) the practical focus of the field; and iii) its multidisciplinariness is one which was confirmed in the debate about the scope of applied linguistics that took place at the 1999 AILA Congress in Tokyo. The discussions were, according to Grabe and Kaplan (2000: 4-5), characterised by the disaccord between participants although eight key points were eventually drawn up representing those which "most applied linguists would agree on." These may be reduced to the three elements outlined above without any loss of overall meaning since six of the points are basically refinements pertaining to the field's multifariousness which, evidently, was the contentious part of the debate.

3. APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND L2 PEDAGOGY

One might imagine that the scope of applied linguistics as defined by some of its most prestigious international associations would be mirrored in definitions proffered by its leading publications. Yet this is not entirely the case nor, as we shall see, is it without significance. The three overarching issues outlined in this paper as defining the discipline are certainly replicated in the collective objectives of applied linguistic publications but the wording of the titles of the journals foregrounds one facet of the field which is not immediately apparent in the statutes of associations: applied linguistics is very often concerned with language learning and teaching, and the job of the applied linguist is, therefore, one of mediating between such theory as may be connected with language pedagogy and its realisation in the classroom.

Some of the applied linguistic journals cited above leave little doubt regarding the activites that they are engaged in. For example, *English Language Teaching Journal* (ELTJ), *Language Learning* and *TESOL Quarterly* are manifestly concerned with issues in second and foreign language (L2) pedagogy. However, it is not quite so apparent that a publication which is almost invariably referenced as simply *IRAL* is in fact called *The International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching* –to give it its full title– even though the acronym makes no reference to language teaching. Similarly, neither *Language Learning* nor *System* are referred to in their subtitled-entirety which makes it clear that the former is, *A Journal of Applied Linguistics*, and the latter, *An International Journal of Educational Technology and Applied Linguistics*. Nor would outsiders to the discourse community of applied linguistics perhaps realise that *System* specifically focuses on "the problems of foreign language teaching and learning" and that the *Modern Language Journal* is not so much a publication which is concerned with language as the title might imply but "devoted to research and discussion about the theory and teaching of foreign and second languages." Moreover, the aims of *ELTJ* may amount, for some in the field, to a concise definition of the work of the applied linguist: "*ELTJ* seeks to bridge the gap between the everyday practical concerns of ELT professionals and the related disciplines of education, linguistics, psychology and sociology."

One of the acknowledged flagships in the field, *Applied Linguistics*, with its long list of eminent American-British editors and distinguished advisory boards, is unequivocal in its view of applied linguistics "as the study of language and language-related problems in specific situations in which people use and learn languages," and it is perhaps not by chance, therefore, that it goes on to list ten broad areas of study starting with "first and second language learning and teaching" and continuing with: critical linguistics; discourse analysis; language and education; language planning; language testing; lexicography; multilingualism and multilingual education; stylistics and rhetoric; and translation. It should be said that this list is by no means exhaustive –AILA, for example, lists twenty-five "scientific commisions" and in Spain, AESLA conference proceedings are routinely divided into a similar number of sections– but the repetition of the word "education" in the categories that appear in *Applied Linguistics* and the implication of educational applications in "language planning and testing" suggests that language learning and teaching in all its manifestations is perhaps closer to a superordinate than a discrete category.

Certainly, with regard to academic output in the field, much the greater part of applied linguistics is concerned with language teaching and learning. Indeed, Crystal (1991/1980: 22) notes that "sometimes the term is used as if it were the only field involved". Cook and Seidlhofer (1995: 7) support this claim

observing that in spite of "the potentially wide scope of the field, it is with language teaching and learning, and particularly English language teaching and learning, that many works on applied linguistics are primarily concerned." The elevated importance of English language teaching (ELT) above other languages is, it seems, a logical consequence of "the emergence of English as a global lingua franca" (Graddol and Meinhof 1999: 1). Brown (1987: 147) observes that the term applied linguistics carries with it a transatlantic nuance: "the common British usage of the term… is almost synonymous with language teaching." Not many applied linguists on either side of the Atlantic would disagree with this claim since the evolution of British applied linguistics is, as we shall see, intricately bound up with L2 teaching. Nevertheless, to a lesser or greater extent, the essence of the field on a global level is highlighted in Kaplan and Widdowson's (1992: 77) review of the ERIC system (an international database sponsored by the US government) over two decades revealing that approximately 45% of entries for applied linguistics "are in some way concerned with language teaching." And whilst Brown's assertion suggests that this figure might be significantly higher in Britain, it appears to be one which holds true in Spain. In the introduction to XIII AESLA conference proceedings, for example, Otal *et al* (1997: 18) draw attention to the fact that more than half of the 100 papers presented in the congress were related to "las areas de enseñanza y aprendizaje de lenguas."[2] An examination of subsequent AESLA conference proceedings up to the most recent edition in 2001 reflects a similar picture.

Thus, one might draw certain interim conclusions about the current state of the field and its investigative orientations. To start with, despite persistant doubts surrounding the long-term existence of applied linguistics both from within and outside the field, the steady growth of the discipline from the 1950s onwards as expressed in the burgeoning number of associations, courses, institutions and journals, is testament to the fact that the academic ground that it occupies is not only a reality but that "institutional status has been comprehensively conferred upon it" (Widdowson 2000a: 3). In the second place, the scope of the enquiry has broadened considerably over the years but the reality of applied linguistics for the majority –a figure approaching 50%– of those engaged in the field in Spain is that of an academic pursuit which is intimately related to language teaching and learning. In sum, applied linguistics may be said to be typified as that activity which informs L2

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2. More precisely the categories on which this approximation is made are "enseñanza de lenguas" (31 papers) and "adquisición de lenguas" (23 papers). Although one might argue that the latter is not always directly related to L2 pedagogy, one might also argue that other "panels" could have been brought into the approximation. For example, 2 of 4 papers on both the "sociolingüística" and "estilística y retórica" panels refer directly to L2 pedagogy.

pedagogy and, therefore, derives its theoretical underpinnings from linguistics as well as a wide spectrum of neighbouring disciplines connected with language teaching and learning. The three conceptual struts identified in this study–linguistics, the practical focus of the field and its multidisciplinariness– are clearly visible in this organisational scheme although the relationship between them is a hierarchical one with the practical activity of L2 teaching forming the focal point at the apex of the triangle.

4. LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE TEACHING

One issue which has generated a good deal of debate in applied linguistics is connected with the name of the enquiry. As Widdowson (1980: 165) observes: "One does not have to embrace extreme Whorfian doctrine to recognize that how a thing is called can have a critical effect on how it is conceived." Whilst this is nothing if not a truism, Henry Widdowson, one of the leading lights in the field, has over the years drawn attention to the fact that the shaping of the discipline owes as much to *who* describes it as *how* it is described. Linguists as well as applied linguists have attempted to define the field but Widdowson argues that linguistic descriptions are misconceived.

From the outset, it is important to underscore the fact that much of the polemic surrounding the issue of language in applied linguistics has been contextualised within its most common application which, as we have noted above, is in L2 teaching and especially ELT. Under these terms of engagement, the central question for Widdowson now as then has revolved around the issue of how far "linguistic descriptions can adequately account for their reality for learners and so provide a point of reference for the design of language courses" (Widdowson 2000b: 21). Whether linguists have themselves advanced descriptions of language for pedagogical consumption or whether foreign language teaching has looked to theoretical linguistics to provide it with models of language, applied linguists like Widdowson (2000a: 3) would argue that linguistics as an academic enquiry has in such cases "breached its traditionalist formalist limits". He (2000b: 29) continues: "Linguists have authority in their own domain. They describe language on their own terms and in their own terms. There is no reason why they should assume the responsibility of acquiring expertise and authority in the quite different domain of language pedagogy."

To be sure, the two fields are derived from sharply divided linguistic traditions. Theoretical linguistic research has concerned itself with language as an internalized or abstract construct; whilst applied linguistics has examined its external manifestation in social contexts and very often with reference to how it might serve the L2 learner. Thus, broadly speaking, the former conceives language as "langue" rather than "parole" (Saussure 1916); "competence" as

opposed to "performance" (Chomsky 1965); and, more recently, "I-language" in contrast to "E-language" (Chomsky 1986). In short, linguistics is about the theory of language while applied linguistics is about its practice, or more specifically, applying suitable descriptions of language for use in L2 pedagogy.

However, the practical activity of L2 teaching also comprises an integral part of the history of theoretical linguistics. It was, as Gleason (1965: 49) reminds us, structural linguists like Bloomfield and Fries, who "were called in to prepare class materials for the (then) 'Army Method'" –later to be called the *audiolingual method*– during the Second World War and "since the war linguists have been increasingly involved in applied linguistics." Thus, after the war, theoretical linguistics emerged as the "new mentor discipline … [which] … replaced literature and education as the research base for foreign language teaching and learning" (Kramsch 2000: 313). The influence that linguists had on L2 teaching at this time is not in question but Kramsch overstates her argument in suggesting that this was in any way a "new" philosophical trend. Leonard Bloomfield, for example, was "committed to the idea that his discipline should find a useful role in the community" (Howatt 1984: 265) and this is wholly evident in his earlier works which were published decades before the popularization of audiolingualism. Moreover, one only has to turn back the pages of language teaching history to come across linguistic scientists of the ilk of Henry Sweet, Otto Jespersen and Harold Palmer to realise that this relationship between theory and practice is one which is built on years of tradition. There are echoes of such a notion in Titone's (1968: 49), *Teaching Foreign Languages: An Historical Sketch* and his citing of Jespersen's "indebtedness to a longer series of linguists" in the preliminary pages to the Danish linguist's *How to Teach a Foreign Language* (1947).

The widespread success that audiolingualism was to enjoy for a twenty-year period after the war was only matched by the severity of the criticism against it as changes in linguistic theory in the early 1960s and the emergence of psycholinguistics at about the same time laid bare the shortcomings of an L2 teaching methodology which lacked what Wilga Rivers (1964: 163) referred to as "a full awareness of the human factors" involved in communication. Rivers' attack was fuelled by the publication of Chomsky's (1957) *Syntactic Structures* and, two years later, his lancing review of B.F. Skinner's *Verbal Behavior,* collectively fractured the two philosophical pillars on which audiolingualism rested: "the linguistic idea that language is purely a set of sentence patterns (*structural linguistics*) and the psychological idea that language learning was just habit formation (*behaviorism*) (Brown Mitchell and Ellingson Vidal 2001: 30)."

Chomsky argued that linguistic behaviour was innate rather than learned and his model of transformational-generative grammar was fundamental to the decline of audiolingualism and was, with limited success, applied to language

teaching in *transformation drills*, which sought to elicit the underlying *deep structures* (what is in the mind) of sentences from an examination of *surface structures* (what is spoken or written). Chomsky himself was 'rather sceptical' that his theories had any relevance for the teaching of languages (Howatt 1984: 271), although once again linguistic insight had found its way into L2 pedagogy. Yet the demise of audiolingualism and subsequent attempts by advocates of Chomskyan linguistics to isolate language from its social and psychological context, did succeed in revealing the central flaw of applying linguistics directly to pedagogical contexts that, in Corder's (1973: 29) words, language learning is about "people who can talk the language rather than talk *about* the language"; or as Allen (1974: 59) put it, linguistic knowledge "is concerned with a specification of the formal properties of a language, with the 'code' rather than with the 'use of the code'."

Applied linguists, it seemed, were suddenly given a more definite role to act as "a buffer between linguistics and language teaching" (Stern 1992: 8) and the misguided directionality perceived by some of putting the solution before the problem was dually expressed in Widdowson's neologism "linguistics applied" (1980: 165) and the wry observation: "You do not start with a model as given and cast about for ways in which it might come in handy." (Ibid 169). Widdowson's comments in 1980, originally delivered in the form of a paper at the 1979 BAAL conference, were certainly well-placed in an audience made up of predominately British as opposed to American applied linguists. By this time, British (as well as some parts of the Commonwealth) applied linguistics was distancing itself from the *top-down* traditions of North American linguistics applied, which "grew out of the search by linguists (e.g. Bloomfield, Fries) for applications for their theoretical and descriptive interests" (Davies 1993: 17), rather than the *bottom-up* approach that characterised the field in Britain, which "starts with the practical problems and then seeks theoretical (and/or practical) ways to understand and resolve those problems." In addition, the final years of the 1970s and the opening of the new decade may be thought of as bringing to a close a period of intense activity in applied linguistics which commenced with the advent of Chomskyan linguistics. The effect of Chomsky's ideas on language teaching during these years saw a shift in North American applied linguistics towards cognitive approaches and the work of Burt, Dulay and Krashen was evidence of both a distinct line of enquiry and the emergence of a new academic discipline, namely second language acquisition (SLA). At the same time, in Britain, the principal task of applied linguists, it seemed, was one of self-justification borne of their successive rejection of structuralist and generative linguistic applications to language teaching. If British applied linguists such as Allen, Brumfit, Corder, Mackin, Strevens and Widdowson, *inter alia*, had been making strong claims that only a mediating discipline with specialist knowledge in linguistics and

pedagogy was suitably qualified to define an appropriate model of language for L2 teaching, then what, the question arose, was their solution?

By the early 1980s, an applied linguistic model of language for L2 pedagogy had evolved within the framework of *communicative language teaching* (CLT). The catalyst for what became popularly known as the 'communicative movement' or 'revolution' is usually attributed to the work of the American sociolinguist Dell Hymes (1972), and his coining of the term *communicative competence*, which involved not only an internalised knowledge system of linguistic rules (as originally posited by Chomsky in his conceiving of the term 'competence') but, crucially, a pragmatic knowledge which enabled this system to be used appropriately in communicative settings. As Hymes (1971: 10) observed, "These are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless." A rash of publications followed Hymes' initial studies and contributed to the development of CLT. These included Wilkins' (1976) Council of Europe sponsored *Notional Syllabuses*, which proposed three categories of language organisation (semantico-grammatical, modal meaning and communicative function, subsuming Austin (1962) and Searle's (1969) theory of speech acts); Widdowson's (1978) treatise for CLT, *Teaching Language as Communication*, which highlighted 'use' rather than 'usage'; Munby's (1978) *Communicative Syllabus Design*, which recognised the pedagogic possibilities of M. A. K. Halliday's (1972) 'sociosemantic networks' in a 250-item taxonomy of language skills; and Breen and Candlin's 1980 paper, which viewed language as 'communication' in preference to 'code'.

The basic thrust of these works was a movement away from the structural system of language to a focus on its meaning potential as expressed in communicative functions (e.g. apologising, describing, inviting, promising). Moreover, the confluence of British functional linguistics (Firth, Halliday), American sociolinguistics (Hymes, Gumperz, Labov), as well as pilosophy (Austin, Searle) represented "a move away from linguistics as the main or only basis for deciding what the units of language teaching would be" (Lightbrown 2000: 435). It also prefigured the multifaceted discipline that the field of applied linguistics is today and, furthermore, reflected the importance of context in defining its lines of enquiry. Henceforth, American applied linguistics, in contrast to its British counterpart, was characterised by its reference to SLA.

Finally, in 1980, Canale and Swain brought order to "the somewhat confused scene of communicative language teaching" (Stern 1993: 164) with a comprehensive analysis of the linguistic influences in CLT which, significantly, appeared in the opening article of the first edition of *Applied Linguistics*, and this, together with a later study by Canale in 1983, defined communicative competence by dividing it into four separate categories: *grammatical competence, pragmatic competence, discourse competence and strategic*

competence. Bachman (1990) and Bachman and Palmer (1996) developed further, more complex representations of Canale and Swain's (1980; Canale 1983) model but the original framework is, as Brumfit (2001: 51) remarks, the one which "has become the preferred basis for subsequent discussion" on communicative competence as a goal in L2 pedagogy.

5. CURRENT TRENDS IN L2 PEDAGOGY: CONFIRMING THE PATTERN

CLT may not in itself provide the methodological blueprint for L2 pedagogy that it did ten or fifteen years ago but communicative competence is still "the most widely developed metaphor in foreign language teaching" (Brumfit 2001: 47). In terms of language presentation, recent investigation emerging from studies in SLA has pointed to "the need for direct instruction and corrective feedback" (Pica 2000: 11) thereby acting as a palliative for *stronger* versions of CLT which have (over)emphasised induction at the input stage. Current L2 teaching methodology is as a result more eclectic in its tendency to "incorporate traditional approaches, and reconcile them with communicative practices" (Ibid: 15).

Yet, like the field of applied linguistics itself, language teaching is "determined by fashion" (Davies 1993: 14), and whilst there are those who would claim that no one method can account for the infinite variety of learner needs (Kumaravadivelu 1994), the persistent dependency of pedagogy on linguistic descriptions has given rise to a new generation of course books whose language content is determined by data derived from language corpora. Sinclair (1991), amongst others, has mounted a strong case for the inclusion corpus-based research in L2 pedagogy. Widdowson (2000a: 7), predictably perhaps, dismisses the pedagogic application of corpus linguistics as linguistics applied, "the textually attested ... not the encoded possible, nor the contextually appropriate" which ignores the classroom reality for learners. Whether one chooses to "resist the deterministic practices of linguistics applied" (Widdowson 2000a: 23), a perceivable uncertainty hangs over applied linguistics, an enquiry which, one might argue, has stepped into an academic breach of its own creation - the gap between the theory and practice of language teaching - but which cannot yet agree upon some of the fundamental issues girding up its own existence such as "the most appropriate model of language which should underpin FL pedagogic grammar" (Mitchell 2000: 297).

Language teaching is inextricably linked to the needs of the real world. It is "a social and often institutional activity" (Cook and Seidlhofer 1995: 8) that is moved by government decree and commercial interests and these in turn are informed by pedagogical theories and insights. Educational policy makers and international publishing houses look to the linguistic sciences for solutions

and innovation and when theoretical linguistic insight is adapted to language teaching, the role of applied linguistics is put in doubt. As Grabe and Kaplan (2000: 3) remark in the introduction to the *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics 20*, aptly subtitled, *Applied linguistics as an emerging discipline,* "full disciplinary acceptance will only occur to the extent that applied linguistics responds to wider societal needs and its professional expertise is valued by people beyond the professional field."

Linguistics, as we have seen in this brief historical overview, has always formed a part of applied linguistics though it has sometimes assumed an importance which is out of step with its real value to L2 teaching. But this is not a revelation. A generation ago, Munby (1978: 6), with reference to specifying a model of communicative competence for L2 pedagogy, added his name to a growing list of scholars who had questioned the centrality of theoretical linguistics in language teaching: "It may well be a case that a theory of linguistics is neither necessary nor sufficient basis for such a study." This is essentially the point that Brumfit (1980: 160) was making in his observation that "language ... operates simultaneously in several dimensions at once" and that if the framework for enquiry is conceived within purely linguistic terms in accordance with the name applied linguistics, then we run the risk of becoming "prisoners of our own categorisations." More recently, Spolsky (2000: 157) has reiterated these sentiments in his allusion to being "trapped … by a too literal assumption that applied linguistics needed only linguistics." His own preferred term, *Educational Linguistics*, along with the label which is gaining currency in faculty departments and on degree programmes, *Applied Language Studies*, recognises that "there is more to be known about language that is applied than just linguistics" (de Bott 2000: 224).

6. TOWARDS A CONCLUSION

The utility of linguistics to L2 pedagogy is a debate which has engaged two generations of applied linguists. It comprises part of the field's past traditions, its present trends and future directions forming a continuum which describes development and change in applied linguistics. It is a debate which can be located at each end of the continuum and one in which the rhetoric used, as well as some of its principal purveyors, appears to have evolved little over time to the extent that one might, with some justification, question how far applied linguistics as an enquiry has moved forward. It is, perhaps, the answer to this question which continues to shroud the field in uncertainty.

There are at least two issues that may have protracted the *linguistics-in-applied-linguistics* argument and neither is directly connected with the academic debate. The first is concerned with the institutional status of applied linguistics specifically within the academic hierarchy. Kramsch (2000: 319)

notes that "there is some confusion about the academic and scholarly respectability of a field that is often viewed as having to do exclusively with teaching, not research." Kramsch frames her discussion within a North American context, but there are certainly resonances of such a stance in British and Spanish academic institutions. And, as we have seen here, applied linguistic associations like BAAL and AILA appear to be reticent to openly state that the most common application of research in the field is in L2 teaching and learning. These associations cast a wide net to define what it is that they do. But to describe a field as 'multidisciplinary' is to describe almost all areas of academic enquiry; to describe an 'applied' science as 'practical' is to define it using a synonym. Neither is satisfactory. Conversely, a field which is conceived in terms of discourse analysis, stylistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, sign linguistics and deafness studies, language pathology and therapy, human rights in the language world (items drawn from AILA's list of research areas; 2002) acquires instant cachet and academic robustness. But the tenuous relationship that some of these disciplines have to the more central concerns of applied linguistics, like L2 pedagogy, is misleading to the point of misrepresentation.

The second issue is engendered in Kramsch's (2000: 317) comment: "The field of Applied Linguistics speaks with multiple voices, depending on whether one's original training was in linguistics, anthropology, psychology, sociology, education, or literature." The most frequently cited 'voices' in applied linguistics carry with them an authority which determines present orientations and future directions in the field. But these voices too speak in accents which betray their academic origins and if applied linguistics really is defined, as many scholars have pointed out, by its context, then it may be pertinent to question the absolute value of those conceptual frameworks which have persisted in the field.

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