

# Applied Linguistics as a Social Science

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*Прикладна лінгвістика традиційно пов'язана з різноманітними аспектами лінгвістичного вбезпечення людської комунікації. Хоча для прикладної лінгвістики основним аспектом є саме аспект практичного застосування даних лінгвістики, все ж кожна практична дія повинна спиратися на чіткі науково обґрунтовані теоретичні засади.*

Key words: applied linguistics, social science, academic course, interdisciplinary, aspect of language.

Applied Linguistics as Social Science surveys the increasing dialogue between linguistics and social theory. Actually, social theory, applied linguistics and sociolinguistics share a set of common concerns and the analysis of these produces a social scientific account of applied linguistics and helps to explain the interaction between social structures, human agents and language.

In recent years we have witnessed a considerable disunity in using the term applied linguistics for designating academic courses at universities or teacher training institutions. The designation is often used for the programmes intended to provide teacher trainees with the necessary knowledge and skills for their future work as classroom language teachers. There are, however, courses more academically oriented also using the same label.

There is no doubt that early applied linguistics was largely associated with language teaching and learning, seeking to bridge the gap between the theoretical achievements of linguistics and the reality of classroom pedagogical practice. Widdowson's definition clearly stresses the primacy of language education: "Applied linguistics, as I conceive it, is a spectrum of inquiry which extends from theoretical studies of language to classroom practice." [2, 1] The pedagogical preoccupation of applied linguistics gradually gave way to a more extensive focus by including more aspects of the academic study of language. Since the 1980s, the term has begun to be used to refer to any area of study that is language-related, and the growing diversity of the field may be noted. The trend is well illustrated by Brumfit's definition: "In addition to what has been traditionally regarded as applied linguistic territory – language education (first, second and foreign language teaching and learning) this definition extends coverage to areas such as clinical and forensic linguistics, lexicography, critical linguistics and translation theory and practice." [1, 46]

The latest developments in applied linguistics indicate that the term represents up-to-date research concentrating on the linguistic analysis of language disorders (clinical linguistics), the use of language in mother-tongue education (educational linguistics), and developments in lexicography, translation and stylistics. It seems that there is an uncertain boundary between applied linguistics and various interdisciplinary branches of linguistics, particularly those which deal with the practical

application of "purely" theoretical sciences. More recently, applied linguistics has been utilised in the study of spoken and written discourse, gender issues in language use, the social stratification of language and language varieties, neurological factors and language dysfunctions, learning strategies, and special learning needs of specific populations. Some applied linguists are concerned with helping planners and policy-makers develop and implement a language policy. In addition, there is a specific area that clearly documents the close interaction of linguistic theory with applied linguistic investigation

Applied linguistics is generally perceived 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. However, "applied linguistics in this sense must be practised by teachers too if it is to have an effective operational relevance at all" [3, 6]. In contrast to (pure) linguistics, it is driven by real-world problems rather than theoretical explorations. The question that may arise when considering the names of the courses labeled applied linguistics is whether, or to what extent, (practical) language learning and teaching problems are or should be included in applied linguistics courses.

With regard to the latest developments in applied linguistics, and considering major issues within its focus, it seems reasonable for educational institutions to reserve the term 'applied linguistics' for the large area of interdisciplinary language-related study, while all relevant issues related to its educational application and classroom work be reserved for language teaching methodology. Thus, courses providing primarily vocational study, i.e. education biased, should be named language teaching methodology courses, and courses providing primarily academic language study, i.e. linguistics-biased, should be named applied linguistics courses. This suggestion does not mean that certain overlapping is excluded.

## References

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3. Widdowson, H.G. (2000) 'On the Limitations of Linguistics Applied', *Applied Linguistics* 21(1).