

Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching

Nenad Tomović



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Nenad Tomović

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SECOND EDITION, REVISED

Nenad Tomović



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 WHAT IS APPLIED LINGUISTICS? —	7
2 KEY CONCEPTS —	9
2.1 Language —	9
2.2 Learning and acquisition —	11
2.3 Theories of first language acquisition —	12
2.4 Second language acquisition and learning —	18
3 FEATURES OF L2 —	23
4 LEARNERS —	27
4.1 Age —	27
4.2 Learners' L1 —	28
4.3 Cultural background —	29
4.4 Motivation —	30
4.5 Language aptitude —	31
4.6 Intelligence —	32
4.7 Personality —	33
4.8 Learning styles —	34
4.9 Learning strategies —	36
5 SKILLS —	45
5.1 Listening —	49
5.1.1 Dictation —	56
5.2 Reading —	58
5.3 Speaking —	64
5.4 Writing —	74

6 MICRO-SKILLS —	83
6.1 Pronunciation —	83
6.2 Vocabulary/Lexis —	88
6.2.1 Presenting vocabulary —	90
6.3 Grammar —	96
7 ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION, TESTING AND GRADING —	103
7.1 What are the features of a good test? —	105
7.2 Types of test items and tasks —	107
References —	113

1

WHAT IS APPLIED LINGUISTICS?

Applied linguistics is a relatively new field. Although there are many authors who tried to define applied linguistics and its scope, we will try to *describe* applied linguistics instead of *defining* it, since it is impossible to define it in just a few words. The term itself first appeared in *Language Learning*, a language journal, where it was used in the journal's subtitle 'A Quarterly Journal of Applied Linguistics'. However, applied linguistics was not defined there as it simply referred to the application of linguistics. Very soon after this, British and American scholars started to use this term to refer to the study of second/foreign language learning and teaching.

Many linguists quote the famous working definition of applied linguistics provided by Brumfit (1995: 27), who simply describes it as "the theoretical and empirical investigation of real-world problems in which language is a central issue". 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 or by developing new theoretical and methodological frameworks in Linguistics to work on these problems¹". Spolsky goes one step further and defines applied linguistics as "a cover term for a sizeable group of semi-autonomous disciplines, each dividing its parentage and allegiances between the formal study of language and other relevant fields, and each working to develop its own methodologies and principles" (Spolsky 2005: 36).

Although these definitions describe the scope and nature of applied linguistics, we will have to narrow them down. According to Richards and Schmidt (2010: 29), applied linguistics can be described as "the study of second and foreign language learning and teaching", or as "the study of language and linguistics in relation to practical problems, such as lexicography, translation, speech pathology etc. Applied linguistics uses information from sociology, psychology, anthropology and information theory, as well as from linguistics in order to develop its own theoretical models of language and language use, and then uses this information and theory

1 Retrieved from: <http://www.aila.info/en/about.html> [17 Oct 2017]

in practical areas such as syllabus design, speech therapy, language planning, stylistics, etc.” Apart from these fields, it is also possible to identify more of those which contribute to the varied nature of applied linguistics: teaching methods and techniques, teacher training and education, second/foreign language use and development, language policy and planning, language testing, literacy, stylistics, forensic linguistics, translation and interpretation, neurolinguistics, computational linguistics etc. (McDonough 2002, Davies 2007, Cook 2008, Richards and Schmidt 2010). However, the list is not complete, since it depends on the ways in which scholars, academics and other experts view applied linguistics.

If we look at these definitions, it is easy to notice that applied linguistics covers a wide range of areas. Although it is so, we will focus on what is necessary for a language teacher. Therefore, it might be useful to state that applied linguistics “may be seen as an autonomous, problem-solving discipline, concerned broadly with language (mainly, but not exclusively second language) education and language problems in society” (McDonough 2002: 11). The cited author goes even further to say that applied linguistics has no “single agreed body of research techniques” or a “single agreed theoretical persuasion” (McDonough 2002: 13), which further complicates the whole matter.

So, what can we conclude? On the one hand, applied linguistics is focused on language teaching and learning, while on the other, it requires at least some knowledge of other sciences and disciplines. The only thing all these definitions have in common is the knowledge of linguistics, but linguistics itself is not sufficient. To begin with, if we say that we are linguists, it means that we know at least something about phonetics, phonology, morphology and word formation, syntax and semantics, but the main problem is how to apply this knowledge. In order to do that, there are certain principles we have to follow and there are also a number of facts and/or theories we have to be aware of so as to apply linguistics and thus help our students learn a language they are not proficient in.

To sum up, we can say that applied linguistics as described in this book will encompass the problems of language teaching, acquisition and learning from a wide perspective and will also include psychological, educational, cultural and developmental factors which play a role in language teaching.

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Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching explores the relationship between linguistic theory and practical language instruction. Bridging the gap between theory and classroom application, this book delves into key areas such as second language acquisition, teaching methodologies, testing, and assessment strategies. Designed for educators, researchers, and future English teachers, it provides valuable insights into contemporary teaching practices. In addition to discussing fundamental concepts, it examines current challenges in language education, including the role of technology, learner diversity, and current pedagogical trends. With a strong emphasis on real-world applications, this book is an essential resource for anyone involved in English language teaching, offering both theoretical perspectives and practical guidance for effective instruction.

Nenad Tomović (1975) is a Professor of English at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, where he teaches several courses in applied linguistics and translation. His areas of professional interest include applied linguistics and language teaching, translation, and languages in contact. He is one of the founders and editors of *Communication and Culture Online*, a peer-reviewed e-journal on linguistics, communication, and culture, and he is also a Distance Delta local tutor. His works include *Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching* (a monograph), *English is Fun* (co-author, textbook series), *Take a Chance* (co-author, textbook series), *Jezici u kontaktu: engleski i srpski* (*Languages in Contact: English and Serbian*), and numerous scientific papers.