AN INTRODUCTION TO APPLIED LINGUISTICS
A RESOURCE BOOK

IOANA MURAR   **ANA-MARIA TRANTESCU**

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CHAPTER I

APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE TEACHING

1.1. The history of the term

Applied Linguistics is a multidisciplinary branch of linguistics which investigates and attempts to offer solutions to language-related real-life problems. Some of the research domains related to applied linguistics are education, psychology, communication research, anthropology, and sociology.

Thus, Applied Linguistics is an interdisciplinary field of linguistics whose main sub-branches include language pedagogy, second language acquisition, language planning, language assessments, bilingualism and multilingualism, conversation analysis, contrastive linguistics, sign linguistics, discourse analysis, stylistics, pragmatics, forensic linguistics, and translation.

McArthur (1992: 77) defined *Applied Linguistics* as "the application of linguistics to the study and improvement of language teaching and learning, language planning, communication between groups, speech therapy and the management of language handicap, systems of communications, translating and interpreting, lexicography".

The term owes its origin to US language teaching programmes during and after the Second World War, largely based on L. Bloomfield's *Outline Guide for the Practical Study of Foreign Languages* (1942). In Britain, the first *School of Applied Linguistics* was established by J.C. Catford at the University of Edinburgh in 1956, and the *Center for Applied Linguistics* was set up in

Washington, DC in 1959. Similar institutes have since been set up in various parts of the world.

The bulk of the work of applied linguists to date has related to language teaching and language learning and especially English as a foreign or second language.

At the inception in the late 1950's, Applied Linguistics was principally concerned with language teaching, especially second / foreign language teaching, to the point that the two terms basically became synonymous (P. Strevens, *Applied Linguistics: An Overview*, 1992: 11). As we have already mentioned, over time, the field grew and expanded to include other sub-fields unrelated to second/foreign language teaching, such as language policy and planning, critical discourse analysis, translation and interpretation, and lexicography. However, this close association with second / foreign language teaching still remains, and it is not surprising that some introductory books to applied linguistics deal exclusively with language teaching (R. T. Bell's *An Introduction to Applied Linguistics*: *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching,* 1981).

Other introductory books present a somewhat larger scope to the field, yet still dedicate a large amount of space to second / foreign language teaching (W. Grabe and R. Kaplan's *Introduction to Applied Linguistics,* 1992).

1.2. Introduction to English Language Teaching

Where there was once consensus on the 'right' way to teach foreign languages, many teachers now share the belief that a single right way does not exist.

Language teaching methods include several approaches to language teaching that will be briefly presented in this course such as, the Grammar-Translation Method, the Audio-Lingual Method, the Communicative Approach etc. Of course, the methods described in this course of lectures represent only an abstraction. How a

method is manifest in the classroom will depend heavily on the individual teacher's interpretation of its principles. Some teachers prefer to practise one of the methods to the exclusion of others. Other teachers prefer to pick and choose in a principled way among the methodological options that exist, creating their own unique blend.

According to St. Krashen (1982), each method will be evaluated using the following criteria:

i. requirements for optimal input
ii. comprehensible
iii. interesting/relevant
iv. not grammatically sequenced
v. quantity
vi. low filter level: researchers believe that language learners all possess an affective filter which affects language acquisition. If a student possesses a high filter they are less likely to engage in language learning because of shyness, concern for grammar or other factors.

Students possessing a lower affective filter will be more likely to engage in language learning because they are less likely to be impeded by other factors. The affective filter is an important component of second language learning.

vii. provides tools for conversational management.

It is considered that language acquisition/learning contexts should be shaped by 12 principles (Richards & Renandya, 2002: 11ff):

i. Automaticity - control of a relatively infinite number of language forms.
ii. Meaningful learning, as opposed to rote learning, grounded in long-term learning strategies.
iii. The anticipation of reward – tangible or intangible, short- or long-term. Extrinsic motivation is more likely to create short-term rewards, whereas the intrinsic one envisages long-term satisfaction.

iv. Intrinsic motivation – not dependent on the presence of the teacher or tutor, potentially more rewarding.

v. Strategic investment - the learner perceives his or her efforts to be directed to the attainment of some future goal.

vi. Language ego contributing to the fully-rounding of the learner's personality.

vii. Self-confidence: – the learning of a foreign language boosts self-esteem and self-confidence. Besides, it is commonly believed that success engenders success.

viii. Risk taking: successful language learners are tolerant to ambiguity, beyond absolute certainty.

ix. The language - culture connection: language and culture are inextricably related. Teaching the cultural load becomes a must as most communication breakdowns are caused by cultural, not by linguistic misunderstandings.

x. The native language effect: the learner's mother tongue will serve as a reference point to predict the foreign language system. In this respect, literature speaks of positive transfers and negative ones (interference).

xi. Interlanguage: the learner passes through several developmental stages until mastering the foreign language.

xii. Communicative competence as the end goal of language learning, understood as the ability to apply knowledge in unrehearsed real-life situations (a question of use rather than usage).

1.3. Approaches to language teaching

This unit provides a brief listing of the salient features of the methods used in language teaching, grouped in four sections: The humanistic approach (Grammar Translation, The Silent Way, Community Language Learning, Total Physical Response, Suggestopedia); Behaviourism (The Audio-Lingual Method);

Cognitivism (The structural situational approach); The socio-cultural turn (Communicative language teaching)

1.3.1. Humanistic approaches

A humanistic approach to language learning allows for personal growth orientation and for the development of learners' responsibility; the learners are encouraged to use discovery techniques, being no longer spoon-fed by the teacher.

1.3.1.1. Grammar translation

This approach is said to have a humanistic grounding (Grenfell and Harris, 1999), although other scholars claim that it is not based on any approach (notably Morgan and Neil, 2001). Furthermore, it can be said to emphasize knowledge for knowledge's sake. It is heavily indebted to the teaching of classical languages and it prevailed from the end of the 19th century to the 1940s. Richards and Rogers (1986) list several tenets of the Grammar Translation, as follows:

i. The main goal of learning the language is to read the literature of the foreign language and refine intellectually; secondly, learners are expected to develop a greater understanding of L1; thirdly, students will be able to cope with difficult learning materials and situations;

ii. Reading and writing are taught to the detriment of listening and speaking;

iii. Teaching vocabulary is reduced to the words encountered in the literary texts; vocabulary items are listed and students are asked to learn their translations;

iv. Translation skills, alongside reading and writing, are taught using the literary texts;

v. Grammar is taught deductively, the presentation stage, consisting of long explanations or rules and exceptions to the rules, is followed by practice; learners follow the prescribed route to the technicalities of syntax. The structures to be translated are

presented in a disconnected way, the learners being asked to identify the grammar items used in the text and state the rule(s);

vi. English language teaching is done through English.

The Grammar-Translation Method focuses on developing students' appreciation of the target language's literature as well as teaching the language. Students are presented with target language reading passages and answer questions that follow. Other activities include translating literary passages from one language into the other, memorizing grammar rules, and memorizing native language equivalents of target language vocabulary. Class work is highly structured, with the teacher controlling all activities.

Features of the Grammar-Translation Method:

Goals: to be able to read literature in target language; learn grammar rules and vocabulary; develop mental acuity.

Roles: Teacher has authority; students follow instructions to learn what teacher knows.

Teaching/learning process: Students learn by translating from one language to the other, often translating reading passages in the target language from the native language.

Grammar is usually learned deductively on the basis of grammar rules and examples. Students memorize the rules, and then apply them to other examples. They learn paradigms such as verb conjugations, and they learn the native language equivalents of vocabulary words.

Interaction: Student-Teacher & Student-Student: most interaction is teacher to student; student-initiated interaction and student-student interaction is minimal.

Dealing with Feelings: n/a (not available, not applicable)

Aspects of Language the Grammar-Translation Approach Emphasizes:

Vocabulary; grammar; reading, writing are primary skills; pronunciation and other speaking/listening skills not emphasized