

LANGUAGE TEACHING/LEARNING: AN AREA OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS

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Abstract: Some scholars distinguish language teaching/learning from linguistics in the sense that language teaching/learning is concerned with education whereas linguistics is concerned with the study of language. At the first glance, this seems to be true. But if one wants to look at applied linguistics deeply, he/she realizes that language teaching/learning is an area of linguistics especially applied linguistics. This article aims at demonstrating that language teaching/learning is not only the concern of education; it is also the concern of applied linguistics. Therefore, this article attempts to answer the question “is it true that language teaching/learning is only the concern of education?”. To answer this question, the areas of applied linguistics are looked over so as to demonstrate how language teaching/learning is also the concern of applied linguistics. In this perspective, the data are collected from the areas of applied linguistics and analyzed via the content analysis method. The results confirm that language teaching/learning is also the concern of applied linguistics.

Keywords: *language teaching, language learning, applied linguistics, areas of applied linguistics, and education.*

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Introduction

As applied linguistics has many areas, the focus in this article is on education mainly on Education Area, Language Policy and Planning, Language Assessment and Testing. It is well known that applied linguistics applies theories, methods, and findings to solve real-world language problems. This is to say that applied linguistics intervenes wherever language problems are. In formal education, there are many problems regarding both teaching and learning. Among these problems, there are language problems related to each field of research and life. The fact of considering language teaching/learning as not a concern of applied linguistics is the issue that this article attempts to solve. It aims at demonstrating that language teaching/learning is not only a concern of formal education; it is also the concern of applied linguistics. The question that rises is “is it true that language teaching/learning is only the concern of education?”. To come to answer this question, the data are collected from the areas of applied linguistics and analyzed on the basis of the content analysis method.

Background

When talking about teaching/learning languages, people think of formal education. With this idea in mind, they attribute the activity of teaching to those who deal with education rather than to those who deal with applied linguistics. Education is one of the areas of applied linguistics. Vijayakumar (2024: 84) says “in education, applied linguistics plays a crucial role in developing effective language teaching methodologies and curriculum designs that cater to diverse learner needs”. Veronica (2022: 2) adds “formal education refers to the systematic studies organized by the educational system, which begins in elementary school and continues through secondary school, college, and universities”.

Since formal education is an area of linguistics, applied linguistics is involved in language teaching/learning at all levels of education. Xia (2023: 1404) supports this idea by arguing that “as an interdisciplinary discipline, applied linguistics has become one of the important disciplines in the study of language, education, and society. Teaching English in higher education is one of the important areas of applied linguistics. Applied linguistics can provide theoretical support and practical guidance for English teaching in higher education, while English teaching in higher education can provide practical scenarios and research materials for the study of applied linguistics”. As English is taught for profession, academic activities such as learning and conducting researches, and other specialized fields; English for Specific Purposes also becomes an area of applied linguistics. Hyland (2022: 202) defines English for Specific Purposes (ESP) as “teaching with the aim of assisting learners’ study or research in the particular variety of English they may need”. Bolton and Jenks (2023:496) uphold that “today, ESP is firmly established as an important area of applied linguistics and English language studies, and research in this area has a strong following among educationalists, linguists, and language teachers worldwide”.

Literature Review

Applied Linguistics defined

As said above, applied linguistics is about the application of three main elements: theories, methods, and findings in order to solve real-world language problems. Grabe (2000:9) assumes that “the focus of AL is on trying to resolve language based problems that people encounter in the real world, whether they be learners, teachers, supervisors, academics, lawyers, service providers, those who need social services, test makers, policy developers,

dictionary makers, translators, or a whole range of clients". Qiu (2020:76) adds "applied linguistics is the study of language in other fields". Pandey (2024: 126) affirms that "research in applied linguistics is problem oriented, focusing on addressing practical language-related challenges such as language acquisition, teaching methodologies, and multilingual communication".

Applied Linguistics and Language Teaching

Ma (2023: 141) says that "applied linguistics is based on the two basic principles of "what to teach" and "how to teach", combined with the disciplinary characteristics of "international", "complex", "innovative" and "application". In this perspective, applied linguistics determines what to teach and how to teach. As far as what to teach is concerned, applied linguistics is expected to plan materials to be taught. This is the area of applied linguistics known as language policy and planning. For what is concerned with "how to teach", applied linguistics draws ways that teaching is supposed to follow. Salih (2022: 203) writes "most schools after the twentieth century adopt applied linguistics because of its relation with the study of psychology and its powerful impact between teachers and target language learners" Meng (2009: 84) supports by saying that "according to my knowledge, the relationship of linguistic theory and language teaching is a dual one. It means, on the one hand, some theories of linguistics can be applied to language teaching, i.e. linguistics guides the development of language teaching theory. On the other hand, a language teaching theory expresses or implies answers to questions about the nature of language. These questions relate language teaching theory directly to theoretical linguistics". Ghafar (2023: 192) denotes "one of the most critical applications of linguistics is the teaching of languages". Khansir (2013: 1145) assumes that "in recent years, the role of applied linguistics in English language teaching (ELT) has been considerable in designating English academic courses at universities, teacher training institutions, English materials and providing the programmes for English for specific or general purposes for English learners around world". Siddiqui (2019:621) who says that "applied linguistics mainly focuses on the research in learning, teaching and education that further reinforces the concepts of learning with proper attention, language awareness, and the ways of student-teacher interaction, the task-based teaching and action research that are carried by teacher as a researcher". Ma (2023:140) explains "applied linguistics, as an important element of education and teaching, can be applied to contemporary foreign language teaching to better improve the quality of foreign language teaching.

Methodology

In this section, the analysis focuses on Education Area, Teaching Policy and Planning, and Teaching Assessment and Testing. Education Area analysis aims at showing how applied linguistics is concerned with teaching English for Specific Purposes in different fields and what is required for an ESP teacher. Teaching Policy and planning aims at showing how applied linguistics contributes in designing policy, courses, and teacher training program.

Education Area

Teaching English for Specific Purposes?

English for Specific Purposes focuses on learners' needs. This implies that there is a language problem which rises the need of learning English in order to solve language problems. English

for Specific Problems contributes in language problem solving. As applied linguistics is interested in solving language problems, it also covers the teaching of English for Specific Purposes in realm of language problem solving. The teaching of ESP has no specific teaching methods. ESP is taught on the basis of the teaching methods of the discipline it serves. This is to say that ESP applies methods of the disciplines it serves. This justifies the fact that applied linguistics uses theories, methods, and findings in linguistics and other disciplines.

Teaching Language in all Fields

Language is taught in all fields. Language problems occur in all fields of life. Each field has its own realities which, in many cases, are different from realities in other fields. As language problems are various, solutions are also various. Teaching is one of the solutions to language problems. In this context, teaching is one of the ways that applied linguistics uses to solve realworld language problems. In other words, teaching is one of the activities of applied linguistics in language solving.

ESP teacher's Requirements

An ESP teacher is recommended to conduct a research in the field he/she wants to teach English, collaborate with content teachers, and elaborate an appropriate teaching material. The importance or aim of ESP teacher's collaboration with content teachers and the elaboration of teaching material is to solve language problems. This fact shows that ESP teacher's requirements are the strategies that applied linguistics uses to solve language problems. Elaboration of appropriate teaching materials implies the knowledge of theories, methods, and findings in the field where English is to be taught. The application of these theories, methods, and findings is the main concern of applied linguistics.

The role of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching/Learning

The main role of applied linguistics is to apply theories, methods, and findings to solve language problems in teaching and learning activities. Considering the application of teaching theories and teaching methods, applied linguistics is an interdisciplinary discipline. It also deals with teaching/learning activities.

Language Policy and Planning

In the context of language policy and language planning, applied linguistics seeks to solve language problems in stating policy and planning appropriate teaching materials. In a country, language policy and language planning are provided by education authorities with the support of the government. Education authorities refer to applied linguists to state policy and to plan teaching materials. With this in mind, applied linguistics is all about finding solutions to language problems. Applied linguistics cannot be separated from language teaching/learning. This is to say that an applied linguist is capable of planning teaching materials and teaching language in order to solve language challenges. This implies that an applied linguist is also able to teach a language in order to solve language problems.

Language Assessment and Testing

In teaching, assessment and testing play an important role. Applied linguistics also proceeds by assessing and testing in solving language problems. Knowing what is wrong in language teaching/learning process is one of the ways to discover language

problems that both teachers and learners face. Language assessment and testing constitute the strategies or tools that applied linguistics uses to solve language problems.

Results

The analysis above, show that applied linguistics cannot be separated from language teaching/learning. Language teaching/learning is one of the applications that applied linguistics applies to solve language problems. Language teaching/learning is a solution to language problems in one way or another. An applied linguist is also a language teacher. ESP is also a way that applied linguistics uses in language problem solving.

Discussion

An applied linguist is not only a linguist; he/she is also a language teacher because teaching language also solves serious language problems. It is not right to say that language teaching is the concern of the educationists only. As an educationist teaches language, he/she solves language problems at some extents. There is not any gap between language teaching/learning and applied linguistics. Wherever language problem rises, applied linguistics is needed either for teaching or for learning in order to provide a solution. Life has various contexts in which language plays different roles and takes different forms or aspects. One language can be used differently depending on contexts. This gives place to English for Specific Purposes. This latter can be taught by an educationist or an applied linguist. As far as language policy and planning is concerned, applied linguists have the responsibility to state clear policy and design teaching/learning materials in the perspective of finding solution to real-world language problems. Solving language problems is not only suggesting what to do in case of language problems; it is also stating appropriate language policy and planning language materials. Apart from language policy and planning, language assessment and testing help discovering language problems during and after the teaching/learning process.

Conclusion

The fact that some scholars believe that language teaching is not the concern of applied linguistics was the problem that this article attempted to solve. The objective was to demonstrate that language teaching/learning is not only the concern of education; it is also the concern of applied linguistics. Therefore, this article has attempted to answer the question “is it true that language teaching/learning is only the concern of education?”. To answer this question, the areas of applied linguistics were looked over so as to demonstrate how language teaching/learning is also the concern of applied linguistics. In this perspective, the data were collected from the areas of applied linguistics and analyzed via the content analysis method. The results confirm that language teaching/learning is also the concern of applied linguistics. It was demonstrated that ESP is an area of applied linguistics which contributes in solving language problems in various fields of professions, academic studies and everyday life. It meets real needs of learners and professionals who actually face language problems. Stating language policy, planning courses and teaching programs, assessing and testing learners are considered as strategies of applied linguistics in solving real-world language problems. These strategies are applied in language teaching/learning, and they are some of the areas of applied linguistics. It is clear to notice that Language teaching/learning is an area of applied linguistics.

Applied linguistics is concerned with teaching/learning and any situation in which language problems occur. Wherever language is taught, learned or used, applied linguistics intervenes to bring solutions to any language problem. Applied linguists and educationists have language teaching/learning as common concern. This is to say that language teaching can be allocated to either educationists or to applied linguists.

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