The Concept and the Scopes of Applied linguistics from the EFL Perspectives at Qassim University

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Abstract

The study aims at summarizing the concept and the scopes of Applied Linguistics as some EFL students may not precisely distinguish them when compared to several theoretical linguistics branches. Such a lack of awareness may influence their future trajectories in deciding the area of investigations and major as post-graduate students since the connection between Applied Linguistics and Linguistics, in general, is very close and has been a debatable issue for a couple of years even among professionals. Various heated discussion has appeared in several workshops during which the participants have focused on the concept of Applied Linguistics as well as on its connection to Linguistics. Accordingly, the controversial debates on the connection between Applied Linguistics and linguistics may not stop easily due to the overlapping areas of investigation and the limitation of scopes that the current study is attempting to identify. Effectively, interview questions were designed and answered by two different groups of participants who were enrolled during the summer term of the academic year 1443 – 1444 officially known as the term (433) at Qassim University to take two different linguistic courses normally taken by graduate students during the regular terms. Therefore, the researcher argues that teaching linguistics requires more practical examples that enable EFL students to be fully aware of the scope and the precise area of investigation of each linguistics field including Applied Linguists. Such awareness is a key factor on which students' future trajectories of post-graduate studies will be based. Although all study subjects have taken the course of applied linguistics, their responses to the interview questions show some weaknesses in identifying its scopes or exactly determining them, compared to theoretical Linguistics.

Keywords: applied linguistics, theoretical linguistics, EFL students, concept, scopes, language learning, language teaching

1. Introduction

During the academic year, 1437- 1438 the researcher conducted a workshop to simplify the interrelation and the overlapping of areas between linguistics and applied linguistics at the college of science and arts, Ar Rass, Qassim University. The workshop was attended by several department colleagues, and the heated discussion questions focused on the concept of Applied Linguistics as well as on its connection to linguistics. The majority of the participants argued that the relationship is to some extent confusing, particularly when we try to go beyond the English language teaching which is viewed by many as the main field of Applied Linguistics. However, areas relevant to education, clinical linguistics, and workplace communication arise as surprising, as many do not seem to be aware of. Interestingly, these issues are discussed by Guy Cook (2003) in his book " Applied Linguistics", a course book that is officially approved of as part of the curriculum for the bachelor's degree programs at Qassim university at the time of conducting this study. And thus, the literature review shows how Applied Linguistics has several cross-cutting zones besides English language teaching and learning. Cook (2003) points out that, it is evident that everyone involved would benefit from having a thorough understanding of what Applied Linguistics is and what it entails. The general requirements and duties of carrying out theoretical and empirical research on actual language-related issues have been taken on by Applied Linguists. It should be remembered that the goal of Applied Linguistics is to look into, analyze, suggest solutions to, and then report on the language issues that exist in the actual world. The difficulties are present in both the teaching and learning of foreign languages as well as in the field of native and foreign language usage. For instance, Grabe (1992) claims that the basic discipline that Applied

Linguistics derives from linguistics has had a "pervasive influence" on linguistics and that Phonetics and phonology are the first branch of Linguistics that has made a significant contribution to the field of Applied Linguistics. Crystal (1992) points out that Applied Linguistics is the application of linguistic theories, methods, and findings that arise in other domains of experience to elucidate and solve language-related problems. Cook (2003) refers to the phenomenon by arguing that **"**Language is at the heart of human life", emphasizing its vital role in humans' life, simply because we cannot imagine relating to our families, making friends, learning, or even falling in love without using language. As he makes it clear, it is difficult to investigate and understand facts of language without using accumulative knowledge. Thus, here comes the role of Applied Linguistics as an academic discipline that aims at investigating the relation of knowledge about language to decision-making in the real world, one which is justified and taken rapidly. However, such decision-making also requires wise grounds while attempting to connect between them and the relation of language to its usage.

The study questions

This study is an attempt to investigate the concept and the scope of applied linguistics. To achieve the above objectives, the paper is designed to seek answers to the following questions:

- What is Applied Linguistics?
- How does Applied Linguistics relate to (theoretical) Linguistics?
- How is such integration confusing to both EFL learners and teachers as well?
- Do students of higher studies, MA, in particular, favor to do Applied Linguistics?

Statement of the problem

It seems that EFL students find it difficult to determine the limitation of the scopes of Applied Linguistics even among those who have taken the Applied Linguistics college-level course. Recently, the researcher has observed their hurdles in identifying areas of concern for both theoretical linguistics branches and Applied Linguistics through regular discussions. These debates are sometimes raised to enrich a specific but complex subject while teaching some linguistics courses such as Sociolinguistics, Discourse Analysis as well as Semantics and Pragmatics. Their responses to the discussion questions around the limitation of the scopes regarding Applied Linguistics signify their unawareness of its scope as a field concerned with problems of language and communication. And probably that is why they find it difficult to specify areas of investigation relevant to the course when deciding on their post-graduate studies in the upcoming future. As a result, we strongly believe that the problem possibly lies with the traditional lecturing methods which leave no room for discussions and dialogues as lectures are mainly dominated by professors. And certainly, there is a great need for implementing a communicative approach through which students can effectively contribute during lectures, particularly the introductory ones that enable them to learn the different domains of both theoretical and applied linguistics. Since 2016, the researcher has been teaching a course titled "applied linguistics", and to the date of conducting this research paper, the textbook introduced as an academic subject in the curricula for bachelor's degree to EFL students at Qassim University is Guy Cook's Applied Linguistics. What the researcher has noticed are the author's precise characterization of the field and its scopes limitations. Thus, the broad scopes may help to settle the long-running controversy over whether applied linguistics is a separate field or a branch of Linguistics, and, if it is a separate science, what are its key areas. In addition to language teaching and learning, Applied Linguistics has been a key component of language policy and planning. Therefore, the researcher attempts to provide an answer to this crucial topic by analyzing the informants' interview questions.

2. Literature Review

A vast literature review has been conducted on learning the scopes of Applied Linguistics as it seems to be confusing when compared to some theoretical Linguistics branches. Historically, the term Applied Linguistics first surfaced when the British Council sought to encourage the practical teaching and learning of English in Commonwealth nations and emerging nations in the 1950s; it was first used in the UK. Diverse terminologies have been used to allude to the idea of being "applied," as well as different opinions regarding its relationship to theory and practice, regardless of how theorists have differed. Stern (1992) uses the phrases "buffer" and "buffering." "Intermediary" and "interlevel" are terms used to describe the role of applied science while "Middle ground" is a word used by McDonough (2002) when referring to the term "applied".

It is well known that one of the purposes of Applied Linguistics, a subfield of Linguistics, is to "address real-world language-based problems" (Kaplan & Grabe, 1992). McCarthy (2001) defines Applied Linguistics in the foreword to

his book as "the link between knowledge, theory, and practice".

Cook (2003) divides the domain of Applied Linguistics into the following: Language and Education which includes first–language education or a situation when children study their home language or languages. Furthermore, language and education also include additional – language education which itself is divided into "Second-Language Education" or the case of someone studying the major language of the society which is not their home language as well as "Foreign – Language Education" or the situation when someone studies the language of another country. Moreover, Cook adds a dimension that includes clinical linguistics, an area that focuses on the study and treatment of speech and communication damages caused by injuries, stroke, illnesses, or age. Finally, he refers to "language testing" or the process of the overall assessment and evaluation of first language or additional languages proficiency and achievement among the first heading. These areas certainly require to be investigated through the application of different theories and their practical implementation is the main task of applied linguists. As clearly stated by Crystal, Applied Linguistics is the application of linguistic theories, methods, and findings to elucidate and solve language-related problems that arise in other domains of experience (Crystal, 1992).

The second main aspect of applied linguistics as classified by Cook (2003) is "Language, Work and Law" an area that includes workplace communication or the study of language usage in the workplace in addition to its contribution to the nature and power relations of different types of work. It also comprises "language planning" which addresses the official status of languages and their institutional use, including education that necessitates a kind of decision-making supported by legislation. Finally, this heading also contains "forensic linguistics" a field that discourses the role of linguistic evidence in criminal as well as legal investigations, for instance, via establishing the authorship of a document or through providing a profile of a speaker from a tape–recording. This view is also supported by further applied linguists who comprise it among others as the main scopes of applied linguistics including corpus linguistics, discourse analysis, and language and law. Some of those fields as they believe grow independent with time (Wei and Cook, 2004).

The third main heading according to Cook (2003) is "language, information, and effect" which includes literary stylistics, a field that focuses on the relationship between linguistic choices and effects in the literature. It also addresses the field of "Critical Discourse Analysis" (CDA) which is defined as the relationship between linguistic choices and effects in persuasive uses of language. In other words, it investigates how marketing or politics manipulate through analysis. Discourse Analysis and Sociolinguistics are among the majors that have significantly contributed to Applied Linguistics (Grabe, 1992).

Additionally, the scope also comprises "Translation and Interpretation, "an area that studies the formulation of principles underlying the perceived equivalence between a stretch of language and its translation as well as the practical translating of any written text or interpreting spoken language. Besides, the field includes "information design", which studies the arrangement and presentation of written language namely issues related to "Typography" the layout choices of medium, and the effective combinations of language with other means of communication such as pictures and diagrams. finally, the scope contains "Lexicography" or the planning and compiling of both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries besides other reference works such as thesauri. The literature review on the connection between linguistics and Applied Linguistics shows that there is a widespread perception, nonetheless, that research on applied linguistics has been conducted by many individuals who lack the necessary linguistics knowledge.

Thus, it is "impossible to envisage an Applied Linguist pursuing relevant research without a knowledge grounded in formal linguistics," such as phonology, morphology, semantics and pragmatics, or syntax, according to Grabe & Kaplan (1992). Furthermore, when examining the connection between Linguistics and Applied Linguistics in addition to language instruction and learning, applied linguistics has found success with linguistics-related problems. The basic discipline that Applied Linguistics derives from linguistics has had a "pervasive influence" on linguistics (Grabe, 1992). Phonetics and phonology are the first branch of linguistics that has made a significant contribution to the field of applied linguistics. For instance, the classic linguistic transcription of speech is the appropriate approach when we want to do an oral-discourse analysis of language. Additionally, the conventional articulatory framework is still effective for treating rehabilitation-related speech issues. According to Grabe, descriptive methods that have been in use for some times are still being used in Applied Linguistics research on morphology or terminology. Furthermore, Syntax is perhaps the linguistics area that has connected to applied linguistics the most frequently. Although there have been many different approaches to syntax, including Halliday's functional-systematic approach, Chomsky's Government-Binding theory, and descriptive techniques, the majority of these approaches have proven to be significant in Applied Linguistics. Examples include the use of descriptive syntax texts in the study of second

language acquisition, computational stylistics, etc., or the success of Hallidean linguistics, or the functional-systematic method, in the study of discourse analysis. The study of Applied Linguistics has benefited from the study of semantics and pragmatics. The most popular area of lexical semantics is used as a resource for research on the relationships between words or the ways that words can differ (Grabe ,1992).

As clearly stated by Guy Cook (2003), as a discipline, Linguistics looks for generalities' primary actual appearances, thus, to some extent it represents an abstract idealization of language far more than the way it is knowledgeable in the real world. For instance, Generative Linguistics by Noam Chomsky is one particularly influential type of idealization, simply because he claims that the internal language is not social but, essentially biological; thus, they are separate from each other, and relatively uninfluenced, by outside experience. Chomsky defines competence as the representation of language in the mind and should be the proper subject matter of linguistics. While performance refers to the actual usage of language in everyday life. Therefore, its investigation is not based on the study of actual language use in the context, but, via consideration of the invented sentences and that is why the connection between such a highly abstract model and ordinary experience of language is very inaccessible.

Hence, the key question for Applied Linguistics is whether this connection can be made, and if that is the case, what can then be made of the connection (Cook ,2003). Generative linguistics is not the only influential type of idealization as he states, however, there are other similar areas such as sociolinguistics that address the relationship between language and society. In other words, it endeavours to link between the variable ways in which language is used and the social groupings as well as their contexts. Another example of an influential type of idealization is Functional Linguistics which is concerned with how people use the language as a means of communication. Finally, Cook (2003) refers to corpus linguistics among the approaches that represent an influential type of idealization. Corpus Linguistics is an approach containing millions of tangible words that can actively be used and reached within seconds, it is a huge databank including extensive information about word frequencies and combinations that is not revealed by the institution. Although these approaches seem very close to the reality of experiences Chomsky's Generative Linguistics and hence much closer to the reality of Applied Linguistics. Yet, these approaches are also abstract and idealized simply because they disconnect language from the experience of its use. Unlike the purpose of Applied Linguistics which endeavours to engage with decision-making, the purpose of the above–mentioned approaches are simple to describe and explain. Thus, Cook (2003) thinks that the relationship between Linguistics and Applied Linguistics is difficult regardless of the existence of some approaches which are much closer to the domain of applied linguistics. When referring to correctness views, Cook (2003) states that there is continuous tension over the concept of language. This viewpoint is common among language experts and those who view it as a lived experience including Applied Linguist's own. Children, for instance, speak two different languages, they speak a variety at home and another at school where they have to correct their language within the school context. The relationship between the standard form of the language and dialects has been complicated by this duplication, which has emerged as the most contentious problem. The standard is mostly utilized in written communication and is noted in dictionaries and grammar books. It is also used as a teaching tool in schools. On the other hand, dialects are occasionally recorded and deviate from the norm in terms of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Regional dialects, which refer to the geographical distribution, and social-class dialects, which refer to the variance among various social groupings, are the two categories into which they are separated. However, Cook (2003), refers to a perspective that questions why kids can't grow up knowing both dialects and the standard form while discussing the advantages and disadvantages of teaching kids the standard form.

One of the areas of linguistics that has a significant impact on Applied Linguistics is Pragmatics. Consider how various readings of an utterance, which are explored in Pragmatics, could be used to investigate how language is used in discourse contexts and the speakers' intentions behind the literal meaning. Discourse Analysis and Sociolinguistics are two other Linguistics specialties that have contributed significantly to Applied Linguistics. Over the past few decades, studies on communicative competence in language teaching and learning have received a lot of attention. Additionally, research on conversational analysis and conversational style has grown significantly, playing significant roles in studies on Second Language Acquisition in classroom settings. As a result, sociolinguistics has made a significant contribution to Linguistic and Applied Linguistic research. Applied linguistics has been significantly and directly impacted by other discourse analysis subfields, such as oral or written Discourse Analysis, textual cohesion system, text coherence, contrastive rhetoric, or professional settings (Grabe, 1992).

3. Methodology, Discussion, and Results

To accumulate the required data for the current study, the researcher used a quantitative data collection method. Two different groups consisting of (13) study subjects, (6) from the first group and (7) from the second group were

randomly selected and interviewed. The groups were enrolled during the summer term of the academic year 1443 – 1444 officially known as the term (433) at Qassim University. The researcher taught the study subjects the course of Semantics and Pragmatics as well as Discourse Analysis. According to the study plan at Qassim University, the two courses are taken during the regular terms at the advanced levels (seven & eight). Those supposed to be enrolled in such courses during the summer terms are the graduate students, and that is why the adoption of the decision concerning term (433) is conditionalized by the initial enrollment of graduate students to be accomplished and opened before other students are therefore allowed to be enrolled. Thus, all the participants were advanced EFL students who were randomly selected from the two different groups mentioned above, and have certainly taken the course of applied linguistics. The interview questions aimed to examine the respondents' attitudes towards the concept of Applied Linguistics as well as its limitations of scopes compared to theoretical Linguistics. Additionally, the interview questions were mostly centered on identifying the EFL students' awareness of the field of Applied Linguistics. The questions were also checked by three experts who suggested minor modifications to their overall structures before distributing them to the study subjects. And finally, the informants effectively participated in conducting the study by responding to the following interview questions:

- What is Applied Linguistics?
- How does Applied Linguistics relate to (theoretical) linguistics?
- How is such integration confusing to both EFL learners and teachers as well?
- Do students of higher studies, MA in particular, favor to do Applied Linguistics?

The interview questions aim to determine whether EFL students can easily define and distinguish between theoretical Linguistics and Applied Linguistics as the latter is an interdisciplinary field that may cause some difficulties to EFL students. Therefore, the first question attempts to put the participants in a better position of being able to specify the domain of Applied Linguistics. While the next two questions are meant to see whether the informants able to distinguish between Applied Linguistics and theoretical Linguistics. Finally, the fourth interview question clearly states the participants' viewpoints on the vital role of Applied Linguistics as a major when deciding on their post-graduate studies.

While responding to the interview questions, the first study subject defined Applied Linguistics as a field tied to real problems, and that in its scope, Applied Linguistics can help us understand real-life problems relevant to language. The second participant, on the other hand, argues that Applied Linguistics is the process of language study in a certain place while the third study subject thinks that Applied Linguistics enables us to know about learning and using the language.

Furthermore, one of the study subjects says that in its definition, Applied Linguistics aims at improving the field of Second Language Acquisition and this is what is clearly stated by Cook who classifies its scope to include second language learning and teaching. The detailed classification as mentioned by Guy Cook was covered as the researcher conducted a vast literature review that mentioned ahead. For the fifth participant, Applied Linguistics is simply relevant to the area of practical language problems and its solution, thus, it has no connection with the theoretical branch of linguistics. This viewpoint is also raised by one of the study subjects who claims that Applied Linguistics addresses language-related problems. Similarly, Applied Linguistics is concerned with methods and processes of solving language problems regardless these problems are through knowledge and experience as another study subject believes. However, for one of the study subjects', Applied Linguistics is a field that enables us to have a comprehensive knowledge of language without evidently illustrating the point. As stated above, all the participants have taken the course and they were at the final touches to accomplish the last two levels (seven & eight) in the preparation of this study. Thus, the above definition undoubtedly indicates the participant's unawareness of the concept of Applied Linguistics also he has taken the course a couple of semesters ago. To sum up thus section, we can say that the participants' divergent views toward the concepts of Applied Linguistics indicate a deficiency in the comprehensive notion of the field. Hence, there is a need for a more careful review of the lead-in stage while teaching to facilitate EFL students' awareness of the different areas of both theoretical and Applied Linguistics.

Concerning the participants' responses to the second and the third interview questions, it is claimed that Applied Linguistics can be compared to theoretical Linguistics which looks at areas such as Morphology, Phonology, and lexis. Likewise, this point is also addressed by other two subjects who believe that Applied Linguistics is only concerned with real problems and has nothing to do with theoretical Linguistics. Another study subject argues that applied linguistics investigates the characteristics we need to apply to language problems immediately when determining them through theoretical Linguistics. On the other hand, Applied Linguistics is connected with

theoretical linguistics and has something in common with branches such as Semantics and Pragmatics as clearly stated by one of the participants, without clarifying exactly what are these common grounds. This view is also confirmed by a further study subject who claims that as linguistics branches such as Pragmatics focus on logical interpretation of meaning, Applied Linguistics, on the other hand, requires more tangible practice and action to investigate problems related to language. Accordingly, the clear disparity of the participants indicates that for some study subjects the relation between Applied Linguistics as a practical field is not quite clear or at least confusing when compared to some Linguistics branches such as Semantics and Pragmatics. And that is why they assume such a relationship between Semantics and Pragmatics an area of Linguistics concerned with how we convey meaning either literally or beyond the actual words without clarifying the linkage between the two or simply mentioning any concrete relation that proves their answers. One more participant claim that there is no difference between theoretical and Applied Linguistics since they all come from one source which is Linguistics. Hence, we can say that there is an urgent need to focus on simplifying the concept and the domain of Applied Linguistics on the part of professors when providing the introductory lectures as any misunderstanding of its scopes may confuse EFL students. Moreover, a further study subject says that he will choose Linguistics as he believes it will meet his interest as a field while another participant shows his interest in Applied Linguists claiming that it is concerned with language learning, acquisition, and teaching as well as finding solutions to problems associated with them. For some study subjects, Applied Linguistics as a field that deals with practical problems of language and communication might be among their best choices when deciding on post-graduate studies. Besides, as the field is also concerned with language teaching and learning, a further study subject confirms that he is going to take it as a major to accomplish his Master's degree requirement. In contrast, some other study subjects are not interested in taking Applied Linguistics as a major because it is a diverse area and probably will be complicated. This viewpoint is also shared by an additional participant who states that he is not interested to take it as a major as he believes Applied Linguistics is hard and requires time to study. As the relation between Applied Linguistics and the branches of theoretical Linguistics such as Semantics and Pragmatics seems complicated, another study subject states that he finds it hard to major in Applied Linguistics and he would rather take Translation instead. This perspective is also confirmed by a further study subject who states that translation will be his preferable choice instead of Applied Linguistics. Moreover, another participant states that he is not interested in Linguistics generally, he would rather prefer translation as a major. Thus, we can say that unless the domain of Applied Linguistics is precisely identified, EFL students will find it difficult to decide on their post-graduate studies, and probably that is why the majority of the participants view Applied Linguistics as a hard area of investigation though they were not able to distinguish between it and some Linguistics branches. Therefore, unless EFL students notice the differences between linguistics and Applied Linguistics in terms of the scope limitations, some misunderstanding views won't be preventable, and thus, students may not say which field is better as a major when deciding on their post-graduate studies. To conclude this section, we can say that the disagreement with this point signifies unawareness of the participants with the scope of Applied Linguistics as afield although they have taken the course and undoubtedly that is why they find it difficult to specify areas of investigation relevant to the course when deciding their post-graduate studies. Therefore, we recommend more practical examples when teaching the course simply to illustrate its extent. This requires teaching the course by professionals who are aware of the EFL students' necessity in learning the scopes limitations of both linguistics and applied linguistics at least around the areas where they need to be knowledgeable.

4. Recommendations

The study accordingly recommends the following:

1. The concept of Applied Linguistics needs to be precisely introduced, to avoid any misunderstanding of the field.

2. The introductory lectures should include discussions and effective interactions to increase EFL students' overall awareness and areas relevant to the field of Applied Linguistics before they decide to conduct their research papers.

5. Conclusion

The result of the interview questions signifies unawareness of the participants about the scopes of Applied Linguistics as a field, although they have taken the course. Thus, possibly that is why they find it difficult to decide on areas of investigation relevant to the course when deciding on their post-graduate studies. As the name suggests, Applied Linguistics has played a crucial role in not only language teaching and learning, but also language policy and planning. It refers to the process of application of theories in attempting to investigate problems related to language and communication. The vast literature review shows that Applied Linguistics is only concerned with

situations when there is an application process aiming at addressing certain language problems. So, it should be taken into account that it is the job of the applied linguist to investigate, analyze, and offer recommendations for improvements and then report on the language problems in our real world. If there is no actual application, it is not an Applied Linguistic study. Therefore, a proper understanding of what Applied Linguistics is and requires would benefit all the above-mentioned concerns. Applied Linguists have committed themselves to general obligations and duties of providing theoretical and empirical investigations of real-world problems in languages. The problems do not confine themselves only to the area of foreign language teaching and learning, but also to the domain of language usage of both foreign and native languages. This necessitates that the course be taught by professionals who are aware of EFL students' dire need to learn about the scopes of both Linguistics and Applied Linguistics at least around the areas where they need to be knowledgeable.

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