Review on *An Introduction to Applied Linguistics: from Practice to Theory*

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Abstract: Applied linguistics research is an important branch of linguistics research [1]. Alan Davies, one of the founding fathers of applied linguistics, has published the second edition of the foundational textbook *An Introduction to Applied Linguistics*. This new textbook provides advanced introductions to the main research areas in contemporary applied linguistics, with a principal focus on the theory and practice of language teaching and language learning, as well as on the processes and problems of language use. This paper focuses on the main contents of the book, the evaluation of the book, and the inspiration it brings, with a view to providing new ideas and directions for applied linguistics research.

 Key words: applied linguistics; Alan Davies; book review

1 Introduction

Applied linguistics, which has developed since the 1964 International Association of Applied Linguistics, encompasses both broad and narrow focuses, ranging from the study of language issues in practice to a specific emphasis on second language teaching. Despite ongoing debates about its definition, scope, and theoretical foundations, the second edition of *An Introduction to Applied Linguistics* offers a thorough and insightful exploration of the field. It distinguishes the approaches of theoretical and applied linguists to similar language problems and showcases how practical experience complements theoretical understanding. The book also highlights key research areas and methodologies, providing valuable insights for advancing applied linguistics both locally and globally.

2 Main contents of the book

This book is written in a clearly organized and highly reader-friendly way. The whole volume is divided into eight chapters, from practice to theory, which helps readers to put theory into practice.

In the first chapter, the author tries to talk about recent attempts to define applied linguistics, emphasizes the importance of various approaches to intuitive definition, and compares the unambiguous nature of applied linguistics with other applied disciplines. The chapter concludes with the unorthodox suggestion that all linguistic research is essentially applied linguistics, where applied linguistics seeks out and works to solve linguistic problems, and where linguistics responds to these problems by idealizing them and then analyzing them with current linguistic theory [2].

Chapter 2 highlights the role and limitations of individual experience in applied linguistics. The author presents seven case studies covering various language issues, including programme evaluation, literacy acquisition, and workplace communication. The case on "critical pedagogy" introduces critical applied linguistics (CAL), which is further explored in

later chapters. The chapter concludes by illustrating how applied linguists investigate language problems through four key research areas.

Chapter 3 examines the relationship between linguistics and applied linguistics, focusing on language use in context. The author discusses two areas—language and gender, and clinical linguistics—showing that while linguists and applied linguists often overlap, their goals differ. Linguists focus on language change to support linguistic theory, while applied linguists prioritize language stability to improve communication in society [3].

Chapter 4 addresses language teaching and learning, starting with arguments for limiting applied linguistics to second-language instruction. The author examines two key issues: the optimum-age problem and the validity of the English language testing service (ELTS) test, considering various factors that applied linguists must account for when addressing language problems. The chapter then explores methodologies used in four areas: second-language acquisition, proficiency testing, languages for specific purposes, and curriculum design. The author concludes by suggesting that "educational linguistics" is a narrower subset of applied linguistics.

Chapter 5 is parallel to Chapter 4, which examines the role of applied linguistics in language teaching and learning. The main point of Chapter 5 is to survey areas outside institutional language learning: language correctness, forensic linguistics, applied stylistics, lexicography and artificial languages (or language treatment). In each of these different areas, the author uses different examples and cases to illustrate the main point. For example, forensic linguistics uses two vivid examples to emphasize the importance of analyzing the statements made to the police by those accused of criminal activities. It is also of great importance to the present research.

Chapter 6 explores the institutionalization of applied linguistics as a profession, covering its development, organizational structure, training, and professional ethics. The author examines ethical concerns, including professional morality and the limits of ethics, using examples from Chapter 2 to analyze project ethics from both applied linguistics and critical applied linguistics (CAL) perspectives, evaluating CAL as a potential substitute for ethics. This discussion is highly relevant to the study of applied linguistics today.

Chapter 7 queries how far current developments in the humanities and the social sciences have affected applied linguistics, with particular reference to the various "critical" stances [4]. The author devotes a lot of space to describing new critique of applied linguistics and thinks that what critical discourse analysis (and critical applied linguistics) represent is an offshoot of postmodernism, masquerading as modernity. Finally, the author concludes that such approaches are marginal to the enterprise of applied linguistics.

In Chapter 8, the author considers current issues in applied linguistics, suggests connections between them and looks ahead to future developments. Roughly speaking, native speaker and standard language have been on the topic from the point of view of prototype theory, magnitude estimation, sociolinguistic view and socio-cultural theory. Finally, the author mainly outlines the responsibilities and current dilemmas of applied linguistics, which is thought-provoking.

3 A brief comment

This book is of great significance to the development of applied linguistics with many strong points.

First, the book thoroughly addresses important aspects like defining the field, its evolution, theoretical underpinnings, and connections with other disciplines. It delves into the challenges encountered by applied linguists, focusing on topics such as language instruction, multicultural societies, and the influence of social activities on education.

Second, the volume stands out for its inclusion of empirical studies, particularly case studies, which clarify complex linguistic theories. Seven case studies in Chapter 2 highlight the practical scope of applied linguistics, providing insight

into both developmental and investigative approaches. These empirical examples continue to inspire contemporary research.

Third, the book's diverse perspectives, notably in its engagement with critical applied linguistics (CAL), are of great relevance. CAL is examined through case studies and ethical considerations in multiple chapters, reflecting its growing influence in the field. The author's analysis of the impact of postmodernism on linguistics through CAL adds depth to the discussion.

Last, additional features like glossaries, exercises, and a focus on interdisciplinarity further enhance the value of the book. It bridges the fields of linguistics with sociology, psychology and cognitive linguistics, reflecting the trend toward interdisciplinary research.

Nonetheless, the volume could be strengthened in the following respects. First, the title of Chapter 2, "Experience" seems misaligned as it primarily focuses on the problems faced by applied linguists, with little reference to experience. Second, there is an overemphasis on qualitative research, with few quantitative studies. Lastly, unclear subheadings make it difficult for readers to anticipate the content of each section.

4 Implications for further research

Since its publication, this book has received much attention from the linguistic community, and it has profound implications for the discipline of applied linguistics. First, social politics, economy, culture, and applied linguistics are closely linked and influence each other. Paying attention to the trends of social development and changes in ideology is an important prerequisite for applied linguistics research, and building a complete and objective applied linguistics research system and teaching system can meet the demand for the use of linguistics in actual production and life. Second, applied linguistics research in China is known for second language acquisition, discourse analysis, foreign language teaching, and teacher education. In fact, research theories should be based on China's national conditions and broaden theoretical research in applied linguistics. In different cultural and social contexts, disciplinary attributes of applied linguistics should be combined to better understand the relationship between language, society, and culture from different perspectives. Last, a methodological assessment of the role of CDA (critical discourse analysis) in the field of applied linguistics can provide both assistance to researchers wishing to utilize CDA methods in applied linguistics research, as well as theories and methodologies to evaluate the rapidly evolving applied linguistics of CDA, such as corpus analysis tools that can be inserted into various theoretical frameworks (e.g., empirical studies, interpretive studies, critical studies).

5 Conclusion

An Introduction to Applied Linguistics is obligatory reading for students and researchers in applied linguistics, language professionals and anyone interested in the link between linguistics and applied linguistics. However, today's world is changing rapidly, the language learning environment has diversified characteristics, and the language teaching process has thus become more and more complex, and various new problems will come along with it. Only by constantly updating our knowledge and optimizing our research methods can we move forward and continue to promote the healthy and comprehensive development of applied linguistics research.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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