

Applied Linguistics and some language Problems The term 'problem' is in itself problematic. Widdowson (2000, p. 5) presents the question in terms of linguistics applied and applied linguistics: "The difference between these modes of intervention is that in the case of linguistics applied the assumption is that the problem can be reformulated by the direct and unilateral (one-sided; independent) application of concepts and terms deriving from linguistic enquiry itself. That is to say, language problems name and method scope of subject matter Linguistics Applied = applying linguistic principles to solve FL teaching and learning problems limited to / focused on FL teaching and learning Applied Linguistics = identifying problems and finding solutions in a systematic way (problem-driven discipline) any real-world language-related problem As shown in Table 2, Linguistics Applied, which belongs to the old paradigm, is a dependent discipline subsumed under theoretical linguistics, whose primary task is applying linguistic principles to solve language problems, particularly those in the area of FL teaching and learning. In contrast, Applied Linguistics, which claims to have set up a new paradigm, relates to linguistics in a collaborative manner; and hence it is an autonomous (independent) problem-driven discipline. It is concerned with real world language problems and tries to offer the best possible solutions by relating them, either directly or indirectly, not only to linguistics but also to other relevant disciplines. Briefly, the paradigmatic shift from Linguistics Applied to Applied Linguistics is not only a liberating move from affiliation to autonomy, but also an exploding coverage of the subject matter: from the limited problems in the area of FL teaching and learning to a boundless scope covering practically all kinds of language problems. A cautionary note is necessary here. The term 'Applied Linguistics' (as an old paradigm) is given by present-day applied linguists to justify that Applied Linguistics is an independent discipline, going far beyond the applications of linguistics and hence no longer under its domination. Former scholars such as Fries (1945) and Lado (1964), however, never saw themselves that way, but rather conceived themselves and were admitted by other contemporary and forthcoming scholars as pioneers in the field of FL teaching. By analogy, one often considers oneself 'a good guy' by pointing a finger at (frequently dead) enemies and calls them 'bad guys'. The derogatory term Applied Linguistics is probably needed to promote the position of AL and makes it look promising academically.

A Closer Look at Language Problems in Applied Linguistics

This section provides an answer to the second question: What is the nature of language problems in AL? Before answering this question, it is necessary to take a look at the 'lists of possible problems' making up the scope of Applied Linguistics, as proposed by linguists identifies three headings as follows: (1) language and education; (2) language, work, and law; and (3) language information and effect (Cook, 2003, pp. 7–8; Davies and Elder, 2004; McCarthy, 2001)

- o The first heading includes (a) first-language education; (b) second- and foreign-language education; (c) clinical linguistics; and (d) language testing.
- o The second heading includes (a) workplace communication; (b) language planning; and (c) forensic linguistics.
- o The third heading includes (a) literary stylistics; (b) critical discourse analysis; (c) translation and interpretation; (d) information design; and (e) lexicography.

Some linguists present the language problems in a series of questions. They are problems in the areas of (a) language teaching; (b) speech pathology; (c) translation and interpretation; (d) language testing; (e) bilingual program; (f) literacy; (g) discourse analysis; (h) medium of instruction; (i) second language acquisition; and (j) legal language. Davies and Elder (2004, p. 1) McCarthy (2001, p.

1) gives a list of 14 problems in the following areas: (a) speech therapy; (b) foreign language teaching; (c) legal language; (d) advertising; (e) report writing; (f) historic naming; (g) language testing; (h) literary studies; (i) lexicography; (j) machine translation; (k) language planning; (l) international navigation; (m) primate/animal communication; and (n) medical sociology. Then McCarthy adds "the list could continue, and ... is quite likely to grow even bigger over the years" (p. 2). Although the word 'linguistics' stands, syntactically, as the head being modified by 'applied' in the given name 'applied linguistics', Applied Linguistics is no longer under the shadow of linguistics, let alone an offshoot of it. In fact, (theoretical or context-free) linguistics is only one of the numerous disciplines (such as sociolinguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, psychology, sociology, education, and many more) to which Applied Linguistics relates in a collaborative, not a dependent manner (Cook and Wei, 2009; Spolsky, 2008). In the many discussions of trends and disciplines, and subfields, and theorizing, the idea is sometimes lost that the focus of applied linguistics is on trying to resolve language-based problems that people encounter in the real world, whether they be academics, dictionary makers, employers, lawyers, learners, policy developers, service providers, supervisors, teachers, test takers, those who need social services, translators, or a whole range of business clients. Conversely, 'communicative behaviour' which represents native speakers' communicative competence 'is [often] vague, imprecise, and ambiguous. 1.2.3.4.