THE PLACE OF LINGUISTICS AND APPLIED LINGUISTICS IN LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

This writing attempts to discuss about what the place of linguistics and applied linguistics is in a teacher education programme for language teachers. Before coming to the main discussion, it is necessary to look at the role of linguistics and applied linguistics in language teaching. And then we see whether these subjects are needed in a teacher education for language teachers or not.

1. INTRODUCTION

It has been for a long time that the existence of linguistics and applied linguistics in a teacher education programme is debated. Many teacher educational designers avoid to put these disciplines in the programme. They think that these subjects are not helpful and not relevant to the preparation of language teachers. On the other hand, it is only some who try to include these disciplines independently in the programme of teacher education for language teachers.

This writing attempts to discuss about what the place of linguistics and applied linguistics is in a teacher education programme for language teachers. Before coming to the main discussion, it is necessary to look at the role of linguistics and applied linguistics in language teaching. And then we see whether these subjects are needed in a teacher education for language teachers or not.

2. THE ROLE OF LINGUISTICS AND APPLIED LINGUISTICS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

It would be useful to begin the discussion by considering what Pit Corder has said (1968: 74) that a teacher can not teach a language by any of current techniques without linguistics knowledge, and that he does make constant use of what are basically linguistic concepts in this teaching.”

This quotation tells us that linguistics has a great role in language teaching. Further, the points out that it is mistaken when someone claims that he has been teaching English for years but he knows nothing about linguistics. What actually he does not know is the meaning of the word linguistics itself.

Then, what is the role of linguistics and applied linguistics in language teaching? To get the answer of this question, it is wise if we see some views which talk about it. Halliday, (1964: 166) points out that the role of linguistics and phonetics in language teaching is not to tell the teacher how to teach. The teacher of the language is as much a specialist in the field as the linguist is in his, and will remain so. He is not teaching linguistics. But he is teaching something which is the object of the study of linguistics, and is described by linguistic method.

Further, he also says that the main contribution that linguistic sciences can make to the teaching of languages, to provide good
Any descriptions of a language implies linguistics, that is, a definite attitude to language, a definite stand on how language work and how it is to be accounted for. As soon as the teacher uses the work ‘sentence’ or ‘verb’ in relation to the language he is teaching, he is applying linguistics.

While Wilkins (1972: 216) points out that it is hard to imagine that languages can ever be taught without reference to the available language descriptions. It means that linguistics will always be a field of study relevant to language teaching. Further, he comments that the main role of linguistics in language teaching is to produce good descriptions of languages. Then these descriptions of language serve as the input to language teaching materials.

Corder (1973: 10) points out that linguistics provides a growing body of scientific knowledge about language which can guide activity of the language teacher. Linguistics gives us a framework for describing what we mean by skill in, and knowledge of, a language and consequently makes it possible in principle to show that one way of teaching or one set of teaching materials is more effective than another for achieving a particular aim with a particular group of learners. There can be no systematic improvement in language teaching without reference to the knowledge about language which linguistics gives us.

From this quotation, we can see that linguistics provides a theory to language teaching. Pit Corder (1973: 30) also points out that the role of linguistics in language teaching is to provide the most detailed and comprehensive description of language. We all will agree that it is an important contribution to language teaching, because language teachers need to have better understanding of the subject they teach. Therefore, it is expected that language teachers who have been exposed to linguistics will be more aware of the nature of language and how it works. As Wilkins (1972: 229) says that the real contribution of linguistics is to increase one’s understanding of the nature of language. Anyone who has studies linguistics is sensitized to language and thereby to complexity of language learning. They will be better able to exercise critical judgement of attractive innovation in language teaching.

Further, Halliday (1964: 187) and Wilkins (1972: 226) state out that linguistics can be more directly applied in language teaching, such as in the teaching programme, and in the preparation of the teaching material of all kinds (that make use in the classroom).

Linguistics is also one of the disciplines which contributes to the theory of language teaching. As Brumfit (1983: 155) says that teaching is not simply something that can be intuitively picked up by uncontructed contact, for a lot of our teaching is highly conscious and thought out, and requires careful analysis if we are to be fully effective and of course there are also a large number of contributions to be made to language teaching by disciplines like linguistics which are not primarily concerned with teaching at all.

While Lim Kiat Boey (1975: 7) says that the language teaching profession today has become more and more complex, and it has three main strands: a. theoretical contributions from linguistics, psychology and social theory. b. methodology and teaching techniques. c. aids and equipment. From these views, we can see that linguistics gives contribution to the theory of language teaching which is one of the knowledge that the language teachers have to have. Further, Pit Corder (1968: 86) says that linguistics has largely to do with what we teach. It has less to say directly about how we teach. It is, of course, true that theories about learning, and particularly about language learning, are more concerned with this, and it is perhaps to them that must turn for description and explanations how we learn languages. But this does not mean that linguistics must be wholly silent on the subject.

From all views that have been pointed out, we can make a conclusion that linguistics and applied linguistics give a great contribution in language teaching in broad sense. As David S. Taylor (1987: 8)
says that linguistics and applied linguistics must be seen as making their most effective contribution to language teaching within this broader educational perspective.

3. THE PLACE OF LINGUISTICS AND APPLIED LINGUISTICS IN A TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS

From discussion above, we can see that linguistics and applied linguistics have to do with language teaching. They provide not only descriptions of the language that we are going to teach, but also give contribution to the theory of language teaching. As David S. Taylor (1987: 8) says that some specific linguistics knowledge is required by the language teacher – for assessment, for choosing learning activities, for course planning and design. There is a need for the teacher to know about language and how it is learned.

This statement implies that in the preparation of language teacher, the trainees need to know about the knowledge. And from this point of view, it seems true what Julian Edge (1988: 9) says, “Knowledge about language and language learning still have a central role to play in English language teacher training for speakers of other languages”. It means that linguistics and applied linguistics have a place in a teacher education programme for language teachers. As J.W. Morrison (1980: 12) says that he believes that linguistics does have a place, however oversold it has undoubtedly been in recent years”.

Before coming to the main discussion, it will be useful for us to look first some proposals of teacher education programme for language teachers which include linguistics and applied linguistics components.

Julian Edge (1988: 9-13) offers an English teacher training programme for speakers of other languages. In this programme, he bases his proposal on the principle that knowledge about language and language learning ought to bridge between trainee roles as language learner and language teacher. This principle, of course, has a challenge. As he says that the challenge is to develop language study in such a way that it supports both language learning and decision-making in language teaching, while also making accessible to teachers an expanding field of study into which they can travel just as far as they decide to.

In this proposal, Julian Edge looks the trainees as language users, language analysts and language teachers. It means that the trainees must be able to function socially as a user of English. And they must learn how to focus learners’ attention on to specific features of English form and function, how to model the language, motivate and organize its practice and its use, and explain its workings. In other words, they have to be teachers of the language, with a full range of TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) procedures at their command, and the theoretical knowledge necessary to make decisions about the use of those procedures.

As far as the above characteristics are concerned, according Julian Edge, the TEFL trainees need addition to be able to talk about the language itself, to analyse it, to understand how it works and to make judgements about acceptability in doubtful cases. In simple terms, the trainees need to be able to function as analysts of the language.

From the view of the trainees as language users, language analysts and language teachers, Julian Edge offers three major course components for TEFL training programme, such as language improvement, applied linguistics and methodology.

In this proposal, Julian Edge uses the terms applied linguistics to refer to two types of languages study. First, it concerns with the study that aims to improve the trainees’ own command and use of English, for example, explicit grammar study in support of weaknesses diagnosed in written work. This study is usually given to advanced learners. But in the case of TEFL trainees, the experience of language learning and language improvement must proceed in parallel with a growing conscious awareness of how the language is structured and
organized. Julian Edge believes that the explicit study on language awareness will directly support the learning style of some trainees. This awareness-raising aspect of language study and the discussion of it will provide the experiential base for the learning of descriptive terminology which trainees will need in their more advances studies and professional lives. Julian Edge stresses that this study will give the trainees practice in the skills of grammar reference, interpretation and application.

The second type of applied linguistics that Julian Edge uses, is the explicit study of language and language learning which is necessary to support the making decision as a language teacher. In this case, the trainees need to be able to recognize, for purposes of presenting new language items in dialogue, when the same language structure is being used to realize different speech functions, they need to understand lexical relationship in text in order to decide which words in a reading passage to preteach, they need some information about error analysis in order to decide which mistakes to correct. According to Julian Edge, the purpose of such study is not only to show particular links between some areas of language description and some decisions that have to be made in teaching, but also to establish in principle the way in which teaching decisions are made, and to demonstrate how helpful data drawn from linguists’ description can be.

In this case, Julian Edge stresses that it does not mean that every problem raised in the morning must have a quick, practical answer by the afternoon. But it shows that professional issues are consistently referred to a theoretical base for consideration of evidence. By this way, the trainees are introduced to the process of reference out to theory that can be covered in any course is limited, and application can be made only to a limited number of problems.

From the description above, we can conclude that the terms applied linguistics is to be understood as an explicit study of language and language learning which facilitates language learning for the user and pedagogical decisions for the teacher. While the function of applied linguistics component is to support the other two components, language improvement and methodology. The content and methodology of applied linguistics component is defined by reference to the other two.

It must be noted that the aim of giving the component is not attempting to teach vast area of linguistic knowledge, but rather awareness of when linguistic knowledge is needed, and the ability to locate, interpret and apply the knowledge.

In the context of teacher education for non-native speakers, linguistics component should be regarded less as content area than as a skill area. It is expected that trainees’ awareness and knowledge of the content of linguistics develop as they become more skilled in location, interpretation and application of that is available.

According to Julian Edge (1988: 13) that the aim of including applied linguistics component as independent discipline in teacher education programme for language teachers is to be matter of raising awareness of the language, by variety of procedures towards the purposes of language learning and language teaching.

The next proposal coming from J.W. Morrison (1980: 10-15), which includes linguistics component in language teacher education programme. Morrison includes the component in the programme base on the consideration that an ideal language teacher should have competence at least in language skills and professional skills.

According to Morrison, in the case of language skills, a language teachers of English is expected to be a good model of English is expected to be a good model of English, be thoroughly conversant with modern usage, and be aware, through his own experience of the English language areas of potential difficulty, such as phonological, lexical and grammatical problems.

While in the case of professional skills, a language teacher of English is expected to understand the principles behind the preparation of language-teaching syllabus, be familiar with various methods and
techniques of classroom presentation and their rationale, with the ability to modify and supplement material according to the needs of the class teaching and language learning theories, and properly critical of claims made by their advocates (Morrison, 1980: 13)

Further, Morrison (1980: 15) stresses that the aim of including the linguistics components in teacher education programme for language teachers is to make the trainees aware of the knowledge.

In this context, Donald Britten (1985: 118) says that awareness of the organization and functioning of English may or may not have been part of the trainee teacher’s previous learning. And even for non speakers who have already studied the language system, some reconversion and updating of awareness (from structural to functional, from prescriptive to descriptive) may be called for.

Another proposal coming Luciano Mariani (1979: 73-78) which offers a program for teacher education that consist of professional components. In this programme, Mariani includes components such as, (a). conscious understanding of the teacher’s role and of the learning/teaching situation with the subject Sociology of learning and teaching, (b). knowledge of the learner with the subject Development Psychology, (c). the learner’s learning processes with the subject Psychology of learning, (d). knowledge of language as the reality to work on and with, as the subject General Linguistics, Psycholinguistics and Sociolinguistics, (e). knowledge of specific TEFL/TEST methods and techniques with the subject Applied Linguistics and TEFL/TESL methodology.

In this programme, we can see that linguistics and applied linguistics take an important place.

In this context, Roger Berry (1990: 97) says, “Even teacher education programme for language teachers come in many shapes and sizes, but they all have the same underlying repertoire”.

Berry (1990: 97-105) offers a programme of teacher education for language teachers which consists of a primary skills components, a methodology components and a theory components. In this programme, he also includes two additional components, such as a subject matter component and a language improvement component. He puts linguistics and applied linguistics as the main contributory to all components. Even though, he does not show the components of linguistics and applied linguistics explicitly, they take a great role to play in the programme.

Peter A. Shaw (1979: 12) points out that the components of linguistics and applied linguistics can be given through the use of a worksheet on which the trainees analyse the language content of their practice lessons and prepare themselves to teach it.

According to Jack C. Richard (1987: 209) says that linguistics does not only give contribution to the knowledge base, but also provide the theoretical basis for the practical component in teacher education programme. Further he says that in the field of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), teacher education programs typically include a knowledge base, draw from linguistics and language learning theory, and a practical component, based on language teaching methodology and opportunity for practice teaching. In principle, knowledge and information from such disciples as linguistics and second language acquisition provide the theoretical basis for the practical components of TESOL teacher education programs.

In this view, we can see that the role of linguistics in teacher education programme is very important both as a knowledge and as a theoretical basis.

Further, Donald Freeman (1989: 29) points out that the role of applied linguistics as one of those which contributes to the knowledge on which the language teaching is based. Further he says that although applied linguistics, research in second language acquisition, and methodology all contribute to the knowledge on which language teaching is based, they are not, and must not be confused with, language teaching itself. They are, in fact, ancillary to it, and thus they should not be the primary subject matter of language teacher education.
In this view, it is clear that applied linguistics, as one of the contributory components, should be put as the main subject matter in a teacher education programme for language teachers.

Peter Strevens (1975: 23) suggests that the skill components in a teacher education programme for language teachers must ensure that the teacher's command of English, is at least adequate for classroom purpose. He also says that in the theory component including as the theoretical component in postgraduate teacher training the interdisciplinary approach of applied linguistics, which integrates appropriate parts of the disciplines most relevant to language teaching.

4. CONCLUSION

From all discussion above, we can draw a conclusion that linguistics and applied linguistics have to do with language teaching. They provide not only language description, but also theoretical basis in language teaching. Therefore, language teachers who have been expose to linguistics and applied linguistics will be more aware of the nature of the language and how it work. This increased awareness of the knowledge will make the language teachers more competence in their job. In this case, the knowledge of linguistics and applied linguistics will help the language teachers in the preparation of syllabus and material which they need in language teaching activity. Linguistics also gives contribution to language learning theory which is one of the main components in a teacher education programme for language teachers.

From this point of view, we can say that linguistics and applied linguistics have a place in a teacher education programme for language teachers.

Its place, of course, depends on the needs of the condition to whom the programme is aimed. As Brian Bamber (1987: 121) says that we need to ensure that our trainees are linguistically well-equipped, and if this is not the case, at the beginning of the programme, some form of remedial work will be necessary.

In the context of non-native speakers, linguistics and applied linguistics components are absolutely needed in the programme, because the trainees need to know more about the language that they are going to teach. As Donard Britten (1988: 3) says that above all, non-native trainees have to outgrow not only ideas about teaching and learning foreign language which were acquired as pupils in school only a few years earlier, but also perhaps previous ideas about the nature of language and what it means to know a language.

On the other hand, in the context of native speakers, linguistics and applied linguistics components can be integrated to other components. In other words, linguistics and applied linguistics stand as contributory disciplines in the programme. As Pit Corder (1968: 74) says that most people have acquired this theoretical linguistic knowledge in a haphazard fashion through the study of their own mother tongue, or a second language rather than through the direct study of language as an independent discipline in its own right during their initial training.

Finally, it is important to note that even linguistics and applied linguistics components are given as independent disciplines in teacher education programme for language teacher, the aim is not to teach the trainee with the knowledge, it is only a matter of raising awareness of the knowledge.

REFERENCES

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