Language and
Education

M. A. K. Halliday

Edited by Jonathan J. Webster

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The Collected Works of M. A. K. Halliday

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PREFACE

Translating psyches, achieving metaphors,
Defining room for mutual, fresh realities,
A calculus for fellowship of language
As power, as making, as release.
                    from *Language and Power*
                        by Edwin Thumboo

Professor M. A. K. Halliday calls it 'taking language seriously', valuing the role language plays not only in our construal of experience, or as in the words of the poet, "translating psyches, achieving metaphors, defining room for mutual, fresh realities", but also in our enactment of interpersonal relations, i.e. "a calculus for fellowship of language as power, as making, as release".

Not only does Professor Halliday believe in taking language seriously, however, but he also advocates taking seriously "the responsibility of the school towards children's language development". This is something he has been actively practising since as far back as 1964, when he became involved in the "Programme in Linguistics and English Teaching", leading to the development of an innovative curriculum known as 'Breakthrough to Literacy'. This programme and the curriculum that it produced was designed to help young children more fully realize their linguistic potential.

Teachers also need to understand how language as a system functions, and how better to enable children to learn it. What the linguist can offer the teacher is a description of language that takes meaning into account, that relates internal form to function, that is based on "a conception of language as a treasury of resources". No matter whether it is one's first or

second language, the learning experience should be an enriching one, as the learner is taught how to explore and exploit the riches of language.

Something else that Professor Halliday takes very seriously is this matter of the social accountability of theory. His commitment to an appliable linguistics is reflected not only in his theory but also in his practice. That much of his work over the years has had an educational focus is clearly evident from the papers appearing in this volume. The papers in the first section, under the heading of *Mother Tongue Education*, chronicle work that got under way in the 1960s, in London, which led to the groundbreaking work on problems of literacy and language development already mentioned above. Subsequent sections include papers that highlight research into second language learning, problems of language education and language planning in multilingual societies, functional variation in language and the place of linguistics in education.

The Introduction to this volume, 'Applied Linguistics as an Evolving Theme' (2002), was originally presented by Professor Halliday on the occasion of his being awarded the AILA Gold Medal Award for exemplary scholarship in the field of applied linguistics. Concluding that lecture, this inaugural recipient of the AILA Gold Medal Award credits his colleagues over the years with having demonstrated "the potential of a linguistics that was functional and systemic: its potential to serve as an abstract tool for those engaging with language in various domains and contexts of application". Those who know the man will recognize his characteristic humility. In fact, it is his pioneering work in systemic-functional linguistics that continues to inspire a new generation of linguists to work towards an "appliable" linguistics such as is described in the papers contained in this volume.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPLIED LINGUISTICS AS AN EVOLVING THEME (2002)

1 A reflection on "applying" linguistics

I would like to begin by saying, with great feeling, what an honour and a pleasure it is to me to be awarded this first Gold Medal by the International Association of Applied Linguistics. I feel particularly proud that my name should be linked in this way with an enterprise that has always given direction to my own thinking and my own aspirations: the enterprise of describing and explaining the nature and functions of language in ways that are relevant to those who work with language and that can be useful to them in addressing the problems they are faced with. I recall here the two "central perspectives" which Chris Candlin identified, in his paper to the 1987 World Congress, as features of applied linguistics: "one, that [it] is social and two that it is problem-centred" (Candlin 1990: 461). These perspectives are significant, I think, not just in characterizing a general approach, a colouring that is typical of applied linguistic activities, but also in helping us to appreciate the essential coherence of the field – the thematic unity that lies beneath the very diversified forms in which these activities are carried out.

This thematic coherence is not something static and unchanging. What I wanted to suggest by my title was that the field has been continually evolving – as we can see if we look over the history of the last half-century, during which the term "applied linguistics" has been accepted in general usage. I remember that at the 1990 Congress in Halkidiki I referred to the preface that Bernard Pottier and Guy Bourquin had written to the *Proceedings* from the first AILA Colloquium, held at Nancy in 1964: they remarked that they had jeopardized the whole enterprise by adding to the initial theme another one, namely

the teaching of modern languages (Pottier and Bourquin 1966: 7–8). Today one would be more likely to jeopardize the whole enterprise if one left modern language teaching out! But what then was the "initial theme" of this first Congress, or Colloquium? It had to do with language automation; they called it "semantic information in linguistics and in machine translation". That does not figure at all among the topics in our present programme, nor is there a Scientific Commission devoted to it. There used to be a Scientific Commission on "Applied Computational Linguistics", listed at the Montreal Congress in 1987, but it seems no longer to be active today.

So while the evolution of "applied linguistics" has been largely a process of expanding into new domains, there has also been a move away from certain areas that initially seemed "central". Of course, this does not imply that such activities are no longer pursued; it is true that machine translation did go out of fashion, in many of the major centres, but some form of natural language processing by computer has been going on ever since. Only, it has taken on a separate identity as a field of research and development, with its own institutional structures and its own discourses: largely, perhaps, because technological advances have transformed both the resources available and the specialist knowledge required in order to exploit these resources. And the original head code, "semantic information", would not be thought of today as an application of linguistics, but rather as a central component in almost all linguistic research. So if we talk of applied linguistics as "evolving", this does not simply mean getting bigger. It means, rather, becoming more complex, both in itself and in its relations with its environment, in ways which reflect – but which also help to bring about – changes in the contexts within which applied linguistic practices are carried out.

But there was another motif in my title: that of applied linguistics as "theme"; and this does perhaps need some further comment – it has seemed to puzzle one or two people who have asked me what I'm going to talk about. Perhaps it was the collocation of "theme" with "evolving" that made it appear problematic. But it seems to me that applied linguistics is a theme, rather in the same sense that mathematics is a theme – mathematics grew out of the activities of counting and measuring things, and likewise gave rise to a concept of "applied mathematics". Here is a definition of applied mathematics, from the *Wordsworth Dictionary of Science and Technology*:

> Originally the application of mathematics to physical problems, differing from physics and engineering in being concerned more with

mathematical rigour and less with practical utility. More recently, also
includes numerical analysis, statistics and probability, and applications of
mathematics to biology, economics, insurance etc.

This is what I mean by an evolving theme. Neither applied mathematics
nor applied linguistics is a discipline: a discipline is defined by some
object of study and, at any one time, a set of principles and methods for
investigating and explaining that object. In that sense linguistics, under-
stood as a set of principles and methods for investigating and explaining
language, can be considered a discipline; and if we take this as the point
of departure, we can say that applied linguistics has evolved as the
use of the findings of linguistics to address other issues – either other
objects of study, if we are thinking of research applications, or else other
practices, goal-directed activities such as language teaching and machine
translation.

But the trouble with that picture, in my opinion, is that it makes too
categorical a distinction between (theoretical) linguistics and applied
linguistics, with the one creating knowledge and the other making use
of that knowledge, as something readymade, in the pursuit of its own
agenda. Yet that is not really how things are. Much of our theoretical
understanding of language comes from working on and with language
in a variety of different contexts, and it is seldom possible to locate
a particular body of practice, or of practitioners either, squarely on one
side of the line or the other. So in saying that, while linguistics is a
discipline, applied linguistics is a theme, I am trying to give a sense of
the permeability between the two: language as an object of study, and
language – or rather, working with language – as a theme. What is
common, as expressed by the common term "linguistics", is that through-
out these activities language is being engaged with seriously, studied
professionally and above all, perhaps, valued as the critical factor in
our construal of experience and in our enactment of interpersonal
relationships.

While still in this vein, let me suggest one other way of thinking about
the significance of this term "applied". When you do linguistics, you are
addressing questions about language that have been posed by linguists.
When you do applied linguistics, you are still addressing questions about
language, but they are questions that are posed by other people. They
are problems that arise in the course of what we might call language-
based praxis: all those activities which are undertaken systematically,
and often also professionally, in which language is the critical variable.
By "systematically" I mean in ways that are based on informed design,

with the assumption that given the appropriate technical knowledge – knowledge about language, but also about whatever other domains are involved – it is possible to organize and carry out the activity in a more effective way. "Professionally" means of course that the practitioner is appropriately trained, whether or not they are doing the job for a living. It is particularly the requirement of the professional for well-informed principles to act on that provides the source of energy for the applied linguistic endeavour.

2 Some unifying factors

But we cannot help noting that most of the areas of work that have been recognized as domains of applied linguistics were already, or have now become, independent entities, with their own feet to stand on; and if that is the case, is there any need for applied linguistics? All these specialized activities – language education, translation, speech pathology, and so on – have their own conferences and their own journals; they appear as headings in job descriptions, grant applications and other contexts that confer academic respectability; and they have their own semiotic territory, if I may call it that: domains of meaning whose boundaries are admittedly fuzzy (but that is true of all academic fields) yet whose central concepts and concerns are clearly marked out. One or two sub-disciplines may have been fostered by applied linguistics, or even brought into the world that way, with applied linguistics as midwife; but even if they were, that is no reason why the foster home should remain open once they've grown up and left. So does the world need AILA? Does it need to harbour a virtual entity construed as "applied linguistics"?

I think it does. I think the conception of applied linguistics, and its institutional incarnations such as AILA and the regional affiliates, will have an especially significant function in the decades ahead. In saying this I acknowledge my own personal standpoint, first as a linguist and secondly, also, as a generalist. So let me comment briefly from these two points of view.

First, then, I think it will be critical at this moment for those who work with language, in whatever guise, to continue to engage with language in a principled way, and this means keeping open the dialogue between themselves and those for whom language is an object of study in its own right. Why do I say "at this moment"? The reason is that for the first time in history linguists now have adequate data, in the form of computerized corpuses (or corpora) where large quantities of discourse are assembled and made accessible, and this is likely to provide deeper

insight into how language functions in the diverse contexts that applied linguists have to deal with.

Second, as a generalist I believe that the very disparate groups of professionals who come together in the applied linguistics community have benefited considerably from talking to each other, and that this conversation needs to go on. I realize, of course, that in saying I am a generalist I must appear as some kind of a dinosaur, something that ought reasonably to be extinct in this age of specialization. But applied linguistics is a generalizing concept – at least that is how I see it. Not everyone sees it that way, perhaps: after the Eighth Congress, held in Sydney in 1987, we decided, rather than issuing multi-volume pro- ceedings, to publish one volume of selected papers (or two volumes, as it turned out); these were edited by John Gibbons, Howard Nicholas and myself, and we gave them the title *Learning, Keeping and Using Language* (1990). One reviewer, at the end of a review that was factual and entirely fair, concluded by saying that the book should never have been published – the topics covered were too diverse and heterogeneous. The reviewer's opinion was that it was not appropriate to publish a general volume of papers from an AILA Congress.

I disagreed with that view. I enjoyed editing those two volumes par- ticularly because of their diversity: I was able to read about current work in so many interesting domains. But leave aside my personal preference; I do think that such diversity is valuable and constructive in itself. This is true of very many academic contexts, of which applied linguistics must surely be one. Applied linguistics is not simply a collection code, a con- venient assemblage of so many disparate modules: the three sub-themes that we identified in our title – learning language, keeping language, using language – seemed to me to suggest very well how the individual papers, through their varied topics and subject matter, did contribute to – did in fact constitute – a coherent theme. And what was true of those volumes is true of the enterprise as a whole, including such instances as the present Congress. This is not a coherence achieved in spite of diversity; it is a coherence that is brought about by diversity. This happens in scholarship just as it does in daily life, where the coherence of language is construed by the great diversity of the functions that languages are called upon to serve.

These two motifs – keeping open the discourse with each other, and keeping open the discourse with their more theory-oriented colleagues – are good enough reasons for people to go on "doing" applied lin- guistics: locating themselves, and their praxis, in a shared action space having language as the common vector. Or rather: not just language, but

a systematic understanding of and engagement with language. But let me suggest two other factors that, while they are present with all forms of intellectual activity, take on special significance in applied linguistic contexts. One is the matter of being accountable; the other is the matter of being available, or accessible; and both are familiar topics in applied linguistic debates. Wherever language is the primary sphere of action, these questions are bound to arise.

Let me recall again Candlin's paper at that 1987 Congress, with its rather mischievously ambiguous title 'What happens when applied linguistics goes critical'. Here Candlin voiced his concern for the social and ethical accountability of applied linguistic research. From one point of view, this is just the general principle that all scholars are responsible to the community. We can argue about whether our work must always have an immediate payoff, or may acquire its value only in the longer term, but as a principle I assume this is not going to be seriously challenged. But much of our research, for example in educational, medical and forensic contexts, makes some rather special demands on other people, when we observe and analyse their linguistic behaviour; how do we bring them in so that they become partners in the endeavour and share in any benefits that flow on from it? There are limits to how far this ideal can be attained, since it is seldom that what we learn from our subjects is going to solve their own immediate problems, but we try to include them as collaborators, not just useful sources of data. Meanwhile, in many places the ethical standards have become bureaucratized: there are ethics committees policing the route, and ethnographic research – so essential to the sciences of meaning – as it has become technologically more feasible has also become almost impossible to carry out. Such issues involve the applied linguistic community as a whole: many of us have to intrude into that most sensitive and personal aspect of people's behaviour, their ways of speaking, and often in quite threatening contexts – where they are struggling to learn new ways, as in adolescent and adult second-language learning; where their old ways have been, or are being, eroded, as in stroke aphasia or Alzheimer's; or where their integrity and even freedom may be at risk, as in confessions and other encounters with the law. It is the shared experience of those engaged in such research activities, with their common focus on language, that gives substance to the rather abstract commitment to being of service to those we learn from.

There remains the question of availability: how widespread are the effects of applied linguistic research? Our 1987 Congress in Sydney (the first, incidentally, to be held outside the orbit of Europe and North

America) had as its proclaimed conference theme "New Approaches to Applied Linguistics as an International Discipline". So: is applied linguistics international? More pointedly, perhaps, what does "international" mean in such a context? I propose to consider this from a somewhat different angle.

3 English at the gate

There is another way of characterizing applied linguists: they are folk who live, or at least who work, in the real world. Not that they don't visit the world of the virtual: they do, and they must, in order to be able not just to operate in the real world but also to think about it. If in addition to acting, say, as a translator, you also think about the relations and processes of translation, you cannot avoid engaging with virtual entities like emphasis and connotation, structure and rhythm, word and clause and sense unit. These are semiotic entities; but then the real world in which applied linguists pursue their trade is, or at least includes, the world of meaning: the semiotic as well as the material realm of human existence. It is none the less real for that: we should not let our scientific and technical colleagues, or our own notoriously gullible common sense, con us into thinking that the material world is the only domain of reality.

The real world of meaning, just like that of matter, has particular properties at any given moment of space-time. We have to understand and work within those constraints. I don't mean we have to accept them without critique; we may use our understanding of the world of meaning to try to bring about change. But it is of no help to us, and still less to our clientele, if we pretend that things are different from the way they are. Now, one feature of the present world of meaning is that, as well as a number of languages that are spread out internationally – English, French, Arabic, Malay, Spanish, German, Russian, Swahili, Mandarin (Chinese) and a few others – we now have one language that has got extended globally, namely English.

There was no linguistic or other necessity that English should assume that role, nor even that there should be any "global" language at all, although it is easy enough to trace the conditions that brought this situation about. Either of these present features may have changed completely 25 years from now. The International Association of World Englishes was founded on the initiative of Braj Kachru, who first used the term "Englishes" to refer to the different varieties of English that are current around the world; it has given prominence particularly to those of Kachru's second group, the "outer circle" of highly evolved Englishes

in Commonwealth countries such as India, Nigeria, Kenya, Pakistan and Singapore (Kachru 1990). I recently attended a conference of this Association, held in honour of Braj Kachru on the occasion of his retirement, and I was privileged to listen to, among others, two distinguished Singaporean scholars, Edwin Thumboo and Anne Pakir. Professor Thumboo spoke about E-literatures (English, not electronic!), and the need to study them in their own socio-historical contexts and in terms of their own systems of values. Professor Pakir spoke about "the making of Englishes", the processes by which the NVEs, or "New Varieties of English", have come into being and evolved. Those who visit Singapore soon come to recognize that a new variety of English forms a lectal continuum (in the variationist sense: from basilect to acrolect) just as we find in the Englishes of the "inner circle" (the OVEs, or "Old Varieties of English"), and likewise in other internationalized languages (such as Singapore Mandarin). The new varieties differ from the old in that they seldom serve as mother tongue; they do not get flushed out by a continuing tide of toddlers – immature speakers. But in other respects their functional range is comparable to that of the old varieties; they are self-defining and self-sustaining.

The nature of "global English" is rather different. In Kachru's "expanding circle", English functions in contexts of worldwide commerce and political institutions, and to some extent in education, science and technology; but also, and increasingly, in electronic exchanges: the Internet, the World Wide Web and e-mail. In the former settings, inner-circle Englishes (American, British, Australian) tend to be regarded as norms to be kept within sight (and within earshot); but in e-English, which is a written variety (that is, it uses the written channel), the contexts are evolving along with the language, and innovations of any kind will be accommodated if they are found to work.

So with English having this dual role, both as an international language (one among many) and as the (only) global language, it is not surprising that it figures prominently in applied linguistic activities, with language education at the top of the list. It is prominent even in mother-tongue education, given that English shares with Spanish the second place in number of native speakers (between 300 and 350 million – both way behind Mandarin, which has around 900 million). But in second- or foreign-language teaching it easily predominates: English is way ahead in numbers of people learning it as other than their first language. Figures are impossible to estimate accurately, but on any account the number of people learning English, and even the number being taught English, is a lot.

So for many people "applied linguistics" has meant, simply, TESOL: teaching English to speakers of other languages. In 1987, at the Eighth Congress, out of 550 abstracts submitted, almost half were in some aspect of language education, and the majority of these were concerned with English. I think the proportions have remained fairly constant since that time: I looked through the 900-odd abstracts of paper presentations at the present (2002) Congress, and between 40 and 50 per cent seem to have English as their primary concern. Probably more journals and research papers are devoted to English teaching than to any other region of applied linguistics.

How does this feature, the dominance of English as the language under discussion, square with the aims of AILA, as embodied in the name of the Association? It is not so much the "international" that is problematic: one can always have an international association devoted to the study of one particular language, and there are many such in existence around the world. What I find more problematic is the "linguistics". Linguistics means language, and languages, in general. What has happened in applied linguistics is parallel to what happened in theoretical linguistics following the tenet laid down by Chomsky: that the goal of the linguist was to discover the universal principles of language, and since these were embodied in every language it didn't matter which language you investigated in depth. So those who first followed Chomsky worked on English, which was the language they had native speaker intuitions about; but then other scholars who wanted to take up the argumentation tended to stick with English in order to stay in touch. Now, in applied linguistics too it has been useful to have one language as a testing ground, in this case for practices rather than for arguments, and many ideas on language teaching, for example, have been tried out and evaluated with English. Many of these ideas have had only mixed success, but nevertheless (or perhaps for that very reason) they have provided valuable experience when applied to the teaching of languages other than English.

But there are drawbacks. There are, of course, universal principles of language, but they are much too abstract to be derived from the study of any one language alone. No doubt there are also some universally valid principles of foreign-language teaching, although I'm not at all sure where to look for them, given the almost infinite variety of the situations in which foreign languages are taught. Even here, I suppose, English probably exemplifies most of them: we have moved beyond the stage where we concerned ourselves only with the well-built and well-stocked classroom with its 12 to 20 well-provided students, so as to take

account of the very different conditions in which English teachers have to operate in many parts of the world – requiring practices such as the "project-based learning" developed by Zakia Sarwar. So I don't think concentration on English has blocked our view of these wider horizons. But English is only one language among many, and there are other horizons besides those of a language teacher.

Let me make it clear that I am not talking about the status of English as global language. Of course there are many things that can be said about that, as well as the many things that already have been said, but I have nothing new to add to that debate. When I refer to the place of English in applied linguistic studies, I am considering it not as language **of** discussion but as language **under** discussion. And here I would like to make one further comment.

If I was speaking with the voice of a theoretical and descriptive linguist, I would say that, as a locus for the investigation of language, while English is a perfectly valid specimen it is neither better nor worse than any other language in this regard, and no single language should (as we say, in an oddly mixed metaphor) hog the limelight. There should be typological diversity in the languages under discussion.

But, as Edwin Thumboo reminded us yesterday, for applied linguists the issue is not as straightforward as that. There are many Englishes – many e-literatures (and e-languages); and, more significantly, many different cultural and historical contexts within which those languages and those literatures make their meanings. So given the diversity of applied linguistic activities – of the meta-contexts in which we make our own meanings – there is bound to be some imbalance in the languages under discussion, with English likely to predominate because of the extent of its dispersal.

AILA cannot prescribe the topics to be discussed at its congresses. But the question of linguistic diversity is one that could be kept in sight. I think that on this occasion more languages have been under discussion, from a wider range of cultural contexts, than has previously been the case: if so, this is a welcome trend.

4 Evolving themes

I suspect that applied linguistics has always been rather self-consciously in search of its own identity. We can see its scope expanding as new topics have appeared: in section headings for parallel sessions, in the symposia held by scientific commissions, in the titles of keynote and plenary addresses. In the 15 years from Cambridge 1969 to

Brussels 1984 there were new topics within the general field of language education, such as LSP (language for specialized, then special, then specific purposes, itself quite a significant micro-evolution), educational technology, second language acquisition and immersion; and other new areas, such as language and sex (rather coyly renamed language and gender), language and (the) media, pidgins and creoles; language planning, which then expanded to encompass the language problems of developing nations; then language in medical and in legal contexts; and also child language, discourse analysis, lexicology and stylistics.

Some topics have come and gone – some perhaps more than once. Some have changed their names, perhaps reflecting changes in the way they were defined and approached. But many came to stay, as recognized (often professionalized) components of the applied linguistics scene. And I think we can see certain trends, directions of adaptation to changing circumstances. Three such trends seem to me to emerge. One is the movement outwards from the European centre, towards a concern with language problems that are critical in other parts of the world: developing new national languages for education, government and the law, often in highly complex multilingual contexts; and including language rights for linguistic minorities – a recent concern in Europe and North America also, so perhaps one should see this trend as a move outwards from the European **standard language** centre. Second is the movement outwards to other professional commitments: the medical becoming clinical, as linguists began to work with colleagues in language disorders; the legal becoming forensic, as linguists became expert witnesses often where migrants and other disadvantaged citizens were facing charges before the law. (There is still some way to go before these are accepted as applied linguistic concerns. I read an informative article in the latest *European Review*, about the problem of false confessions in criminal courts; it was not suggested that this was in any way concerned with language.) And third, there has been movement outwards from a monolithic conception of language, with recognition that a language is an inherently variable system and that our understanding has to come from observing how folks act and interact via language throughout all the changing scenes in which they are players. (This is where we see the significance of the shift whereby LSP evolved from specialized purposes, through special purposes, to specific purposes, as it was realized that functional variation (variation in register) is not some specialized use or uses of language but a normal concomitant of the linguistic division of labour.)

But if we think about these three outward movements, to other societies and cultures, to other professional domains, to other forms of discourse, we can see a deeper and I think more long-term pattern emerging, whereby people's perception of language itself has been changing. We have become more aware of the importance of meaning – of the semiotic aspect of human existence. Perhaps we have become re-aware of it: the awareness may have got lost when the old magical, epic and religious ways of thinking gave way before the forces of technology – I'm not sure; but if so, I believe our awareness may now be at a higher level. Like all living beings, at least all those endowed with consciousness, we inhabit two planes: a plane of matter and a plane of meaning – the material and the semiotic; and we are now more attuned to the power that resides in the semiotic realm, which in a sense is what the applied linguistic enterprise is all about. This is in part what people meant by the "information society", where most of the population-energy is spent moving and exchanging information rather than moving and exchanging goods and services; in part what Chris Brumfit described as taking up the postmodern project (1997: 22ff.), so that we are better able to reflect on the meanings we import, and export, through our own subject positions and their accompanying ideologies; in part our awareness of the awesome power of the media, now not so much reporting on people's doings as actively instigating and manipulating them. As Edwin Thumboo said in his paper, whatever is happening, language is there, and we are now at least coming to acknowledge it. So while as applied linguists our aim may be to intervene, we know that, to intervene effectively, we have to be also linguists; our programme now includes writing grammars and dictionaries, analysing discourse, studying diatypic variation, and so forth. It is this increasing and deepening engagement with language, the recognition of it as critical to our individual and social being, that I see as the central theme around which applied linguistics has been evolving.

But, as we learn more about the power of language, and its penetration into everything we do and think, so we also come to realize that intervening in the processes of language is an extraordinarily complex affair, both in its methods and in its aims. I may assume a certain goal, taking for granted, say, that in teaching a foreign language my aim is to enable the learners to use that language effectively; my problem then is: am I going about it the right way? will what I do help them to achieve that state? and we all know how hard it is to answer that. But we often cannot take for granted what the aim of our intervention ought to be.

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5 Problematizing our goals

I once went to an academic lecture on the semiotics of marketing. I was naïve: I assumed that the speaker would tell me about the verbal and other semiotic strategies for selling things that I, as a consumer, had to recognize and learn to resist. But no: what I learnt (or would have learnt, if I'd followed the course) was how to use semiotic strategies to become a more effective salesman. I probably could have turned the lesson round, and made what I learnt serve my own purpose, that of more effective resistance; but that was not the purpose for which the lesson was being taught.

Those encountering forensic linguistics for the first time often assume that the linguist as expert witness is always a witness for the defence. And so they very often are. But the linguist may also be a witness for the prosecution, for example in revealing a forgery, or a fake suicide note that has been put in place by a murderer. We can still assume a common aim, but it has to be stated in more abstract terms: we assume linguistics is being applied in the service of justice.

Recently I started reading a book by the distinguished French linguist Claude Hagège, called *Halte à la mort des langues* "Put a stop to the death of languages" (or "language death", as it has now come to be technical-ized) (2000). Like all Hagège's books, it is amazingly broad-ranging, taking in for example cases of language survival ranging from that of English under the "Norman yoke" (the conquest and occupation of England by the Norman French) to that of a variety of Aleut spoken by the 350 inhabitants of a small island to the east of Kamchatka, which is in fact a mixture of Aleut and Russian. Since English was also a mixed language, it seems that in both these cases mixing proved to be a useful survival strategy.

Hagège's provocative title suggests that the message is intervention: something should be done. But this is an area where intervention is an extraordinarily complex issue, raising difficult questions of whether the applied linguistic community should try to act, and if so, how. For example: it is tempting to argue from the biological to the linguistic sphere, and to say that, just as diversity of species is necessary to environ-mental, ecological well-being, so diversity of languages is necessary to cultural, eco-social well-being. But does the analogy hold? And, before we even ask that question, what is current thinking on biodiversity: does it refer to species, or to groups of species? what is needed for the health of the planet: large numbers of individually differentiated species, or representatives of a smaller number of ecologically defined species

types? But then, whatever the preferred interpretation, how do we reason from diversity of species – biodiversity – to diversity of languages – glossodiversity, let us say? And then, is it glossodiversity we should be concerned with, or semodiversity: diversity of forms as well as meanings, or just diversity of meanings? And exactly what is the value that attaches to such diversity, for the human race as a whole?

Then, supposing we find answers to all these questions, we come up against another one, perhaps the most difficult of all, and one to which biology offers no analogies: what is the relation between 'good for the human race in general' and 'good for the specific community whose language is under threat of extinction'? All these are considerations that arise within one component of ecolinguistics: what we might call institutional ecolinguistics, the relation between a language and those who speak it (and also, in this case, those who may be speaking it no longer). There are further questions in what we might call systemic ecolinguistics, some of which I raised at the Ninth Congress of AILA: how do our ways of meaning affect the impact we have on the environment? Which then raises the further question: how are the institutional and the systemic factors interrelated? And so on.

With the problem of language death we are at the other end of the globalization scale from English: here we are concerned with very small languages, many of which are rapidly becoming annihilated. Perhaps this is only a very small concern, in relation to applied linguistics as a whole. But – if we hold on, as I think we should, to the concept of an applied linguistics community – our different spheres of activity are not insulated one from another. At some time in the future the applied linguistics project will be judged by its success, or at least by its efforts, in engaging with all aspects of the human semiotic condition.

6 A personal conclusion

I began my career as a language teacher: I taught my first foreign-language class on 13 May 1945, and this remained my profession (with some interruptions) for the next 13 years. I had already started asking difficult questions about language in my earlier role as a language learner, but now they became more urgent. My students were adults, mainly rather tough-minded adults, and they wanted explanations – which I was generally unable to provide. During those 13 years I was also engaging with language in other ways, and these raised further questions: questions relating to translation, to stylistics, to sociopolitical discourse; but all my questioning was essentially problem-driven – I needed to find out more

about language to cope with language-based tasks, some of them more research-oriented, some more immediately practical. That has always been my angle of vision; the difference is that, the older you get the more you realize that the payoff may be quite far away in time, and is often oblique rather than pointing straight towards the target.

Since this is a very personal occasion, perhaps I might be allowed to recall some of those early questions, and the contexts in which they arose. Here are five that occur to me as I think back.

1. I had to translate a play, one or two songs, and some scientific articles into English from the original Chinese. How, and why, does a language vary in different functional contexts? and is this variation preserved in some way across languages?
2. I had to explain to the learners the order of elements in a Chinese clause. How does a speaker decide what comes first and what comes last? What are the different meanings carried by variation in word order? And what on earth does "fixed word order" mean?
3. I had to work out how intonation relates to meaning. Where does intonation figure in the description of a language, given that (a) the meaning of a tone contour varies with the grammatical environment, and (b) meanings expressed by intonation in one tongue (one language, or one dialect) may be expressed by other, grammatical or lexical, resources in another.
4. I had to analyse some poetic texts, in Chinese and in English. How is a text held together? what takes over where grammatical structure leaves off? What is the relation of poetic patterns (e.g. metre) to those of the everyday language?
5. I had to represent a sentence in English, Chinese and Italian for a project in machine translation. Where, and how, could these three languages be brought together: in structure, or in system? and also, although I didn't yet know how to ask this question, in lexicogrammar, or in semantics?

Gradually I built up resources for facing up to questions like these. At some point along the way, I discovered this thing called linguistics; and I was truly lucky in having two of the great linguists of the time as my teachers: Professor Wang Li, of Lingnan University in China, and Professor J. R. Firth at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. They provided me with a rich store of basic knowledge about language, and, equally important, they taught me how to engage with language in order to find out more. And then, when

I got my first job in linguistics, at the University of Edinburgh, I was again fortunate in having Angus McIntosh and David Abercrombie as the senior scholars in the field; and as younger colleagues two of the founders of applied linguistics in Britain, Ian Catford and Peter Strevens. Catford and Strevens were already collaborating with colleagues in France, such as Paul Rivenc and the other authors of "Français élémentaire" (later "Français fondamental"); they shared the same aim of bringing linguistic theory to bear on the teaching of English and French as second languages, particularly in former colonies (and countries that were about to become former colonies). Ian Catford became Director of the School of Applied Linguistics when it opened in Edinburgh in 1956. Peter Strevens was a founder member of AILA and remained active in the field until 1989, when he died. An important component in the origins of the Association derives from that early collaboration between the French and the British specialists in second-language teaching.

But in accepting this very generous award today, I would like to acknowledge that I do so on behalf of the many colleagues who have worked with me over the succeeding years. They were the ones who demonstrated the potential of a linguistics that was functional and systemic: its potential to serve as an abstract tool for those engaging with language in various domains and contexts of application. I am not a very single-minded person – I tend towards the dilettante rather than the obsessive; but if there is one aim that I have kept fairly constantly in view, it is that of working towards – I won't say an "applied", but rather an "appliable" linguistics; and that would not have been possible without being able to work with people who built on my ideas and then came back to tell me what was wrong with them.

Back in the 1960s, in London, we had a research and curriculum development project entitled the Programme in Linguistics and English Teaching, in which primary, secondary and tertiary-level teachers all worked together in the application of linguistic theory to mother-tongue education. The materials that came out of that project – Breakthrough to Literacy, Language and Communication, and Language in Use – exploited, and explored, specific areas within language such as functional variation (register), writing systems, pattern frequencies, and also the relations between language and other semiotic systems. They were working in the framework of an overall model of language, which in turn continued to evolve in the light of their endeavours: David Mackay, Ian Forsyth, Peter Doughty and the other members of the teams showed clearly in their work the applied linguistic nature of the enterprise. In the 1980s and 1990s in Australia a new initiative in

mother-tongue education was led by my colleague Jim Martin. This started with a project on primary children's writing, in which he collaborated with Joan Rothery; Jim Martin subsequently directed a much more broadly based programme, the Disadvantaged Schools Project in the Sydney Metropolitan Region, in which teachers in all subjects – science, maths, history, and so on – participated in a genre-based approach involving close attention to, and analysis of, the critical discourses of learning in school. Geoff Williams has shown how effectively a functional grammar can be taught to primary-school children to develop their literacy skills at any point from Year 2 onwards. Frances Christie has developed powerful language-based teacher educational programmes in various centres in Australia, and has now produced a series of language coursebooks for use in the first years of secondary schooling. Such enterprises are based on the premise that all learning under instruction, whatever the field, is essentially an applied linguistic task, on the part of both teacher and learner: both are applying their knowledge of language, and both can do so more effectively – can add a further dimension to the experience – if they also apply a knowledge of the relevant bits of linguistics.

Accompanying, and also underpinning, the work in language education has been the analysis of text and discourse in systemic functional terms, again starting in the 1960s with the corpus-based work of Rodney Huddleston, Richard Hudson and Eugene Winter at University College London, investigating the discourses of science. At the same time Ruqaiya Hasan began her studies in the analysis first of literary texts and then of children's narratives; and in the 1980s she directed, and carried out together with Carmel Cloran, a large-scale corpus-based study of the verbal interaction between mothers and pre-school children in their homes, showing how semantic variation is the critical factor in differentiating among populations (defined in this instance by sex and social class). The interdependence of theory and description is particularly highlighted in the analysis of natural spontaneous speech, as Hasan's work brings out: it demands a comprehensive approach to lexicogrammar, semantics and context – compare in this regard the important study by Suzanne Eggins and Diana Slade in the linguistic analysis of casual conversation (1997). J.R. Martin's book *English Text: System and Structure* (1992) gave the clearest presentation of the grounding of discourse analysis in linguistic theory; and numerous text studies, both in specific varieties of English and in languages other than English, illustrate how discourse analysis provides an essential interface between theoretical and applied linguistics.

But, as I said at the beginning, I find this line very difficult to draw, and in many of the fields recognized by AILA it seems to me that systemic functional studies typically transcend this distinction: I have in mind, for example, Erich Steiner's work in translation, or Gordon Tucker's in lexicology, or the work of the Clinical Linguistics Research Program instituted by Elizabeth Armstrong and her colleagues. Let me mention just one further domain, that of computational linguistics and natural language processing. Here there has been a great deal of systemic work since the early projects of Terry Winograd and Anthony Davey, and two large-scale projects stand out: that of Robin Fawcett at Cardiff University in Wales, and that directed by William Mann at the University of Southern California, in which Christian Matthiessen was the resident linguist. Both Matthiessen and Fawcett construed the demands made by computational work of this nature into major sources of theoretical insight; and with each new advance in technology the potential of the computer for applying knowledge about language, and thereby for expanding such knowledge, has itself been continually expanding. Examples are the multilingual text-generation work by Christian Matthiessen, John Bateman, Wu Canzhong and others; software for teaching and research in systemic grammar, by Mick O'Donnell in Edinburgh and by Kay O'Halloran and Kevin Judd here in Singapore; grammar databases for language teachers such as that developed by Amy Tsui in Hong Kong, and Michio Sugeno's "intelligent computing" research at the Brain Science Institute in Tokyo. The major work being carried on by Kristin Davidse and her team at Leuven, extending the functional grammar further in delicacy, might be thought of as more oriented towards theory; but it too makes use of a computerized corpus (and it is certainly not divorced from application).

Let me emphasize that this is not a general survey of systemic work; this would not be the occasion for it, and in any case the time is long past when I could attempt to keep abreast of all that is going on. I have wanted just to locate my own work in something of its wider context. As will appear, much of this effort, as in linguistics in general, has been expended on aspects of English; but it has never been anglo- (or even euro-) centric, and my own starting point as a grammarian was in fact the grammar of Chinese. Although I had to switch to English for much of my later career, the experience with Chinese played a significant part in shaping my ideas on language: especially pointing towards a unified lexicogrammar as the resource for the creation of meaning, and towards the importance of system (rather than structure) as the level where languages meet. Many languages have now been and are being interpreted

in our systemic terms; but Chinese has remained at the forefront, and our Chinese colleagues, such as Hu Zhuanglin, Fang Yan, Zhu Yongsheng, Zhang Delu and Huang Guowen – and of course my co-presenter at this Congress Hu Wenzhong – are showing how important it is for an appliable linguistics to be grounded in a multilanguage foundation.

These are just some of the people thanks to whom I am able to stand here in front of you today. As long as applied linguistics goes on bringing together, in a spirit of inclusion, diverse questions about language, diverse fields of application, and also a diversity of languages under focus of attention, it will no doubt continue to evolve. My own great privilege has been to have been present and, in a small way, to have participated in half a century of its evolution – especially at a time when we have been forced to become aware of the enormous power that language deploys in maintaining and moulding our lives.

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PART ONE

MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

In the first chapter, 'Linguistics and the Teaching of English' (1967), Professor M.A.K. Halliday discusses the relevance of linguistics in the teaching of English as a native language. In particular, he argues that it would be useful for the language teacher – whether teaching the native or a foreign language – to have some knowledge of both 'descriptive' and 'institutional' linguistics. By 'descriptive linguistics' he means "the branch of the subject which is concerned with the organization and meaning of language"; and by 'institutional linguistics', he has in mind the sociological aspects of language, i.e. "the relation between a language and its speakers".

Chapter Two, 'A "Linguistic Approach" to the Teaching of the Mother Tongue?' (1971), focuses on the research and curriculum development work undertaken between 1964 and 1970 as part of the "Programme in Linguistics and English Teaching". Professor Halliday describes their approach as 'linguistic', or, in other words, one that takes language seriously, and gives attention to three significant perspectives on language: language as system, language and the individual, and language and society.

In 'Some Thoughts on Language in the Middle School Years' (1977), Professor Halliday approaches language from a functional perspective, as a 'resource', looking at how language functions "in the many and varied contexts in which it is used", and how language meets the demands that we as its users make on it. "If we take seriously the responsibility of the school towards children's language development," he writes, "we need clearly thought out, professional approaches to language in the classroom, based on teachers' understanding of how language functions, of how its internal form relates to the way it functions, and of how children come to learn it."

Moving on from the discussion in the previous chapter on the middle school years, Professor Halliday, in Chapter Four, 'Differences between Spoken and Written Language: Some Implications for Literacy Teaching' (1979), takes up literacy teaching in secondary education, emphasizing the need to develop sensitivity to and control over register variation, including the differences observed between speech and writing.

In 'Language and Socialization: Home and School' (1988), Professor Halliday credits the fact that Bernstein gives a place in his socialization model to language for enabling his model not only to explain how culture is transmitted, but also to accommodate both persistence and change. Because language plays such a significant role in turning our experience into knowledge, he concludes that "acting on language can change the nature of knowledge – and therefore, the nature of learning and of education as well".

In the final chapter of this section, 'Literacy and Linguistics: A Functional Perspective' (1996), Professor Halliday explores the concept of literacy from a linguistic point of view, or as he puts it, attempting "to trace a course through what Graff called the labyrinth of literacy, while interpreting literacy in linguistic terms".

Chapter One

LINGUISTICS AND THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH (1967)

Any discussion of the role of linguistics in the teaching of English as a native language in our schools presupposes some concept of the aims that English teaching is intended to achieve. There is probably no subject in the curriculum whose aims are so often formulated as are those of English language, yet they remain by and large ill–defined, controversial and obscure. In face of this there might be some advantage in beginning at the opposite end, using linguistic concepts to define the possible goals of English language teaching and the standards that might reasonably hope to be achieved. This in turn may help to circumscribe the role of linguistics in, or rather behind, the teaching operation.

In one rather extreme view, the English class is the only one that contributes nothing to the child's mastery of his native language: he 'learns' English only outside school or in the course of studying other school subjects, such as geography and mathematics. "English" is then reserved for the study of literature, and if explicit attention is paid to language this generally takes the form of linguistic criticism, in which the pupil learns to comment in evaluative terms on what has been written or spoken by others, or even on the language as such. This practice is open to various objections, primarily that it is likely to be either trivial or private: to 'state what is wrong with . . .' is essentially a trivial and negative exercise, while questions such as 'do you think that the English language has gained or lost by the disappearance of its inflexional endings?' can be discussed only in private and subjective terms.

Many teachers who would probably not go so far as to deny that language work has a place in the English class nevertheless appear implicitly to accept this view. If, for example, it is left to the science

teacher to teach the pupils how to write "scientific English", the implication is that it is not part of the English teacher's task to help him to do so. There will always be a language component in the science teacher's work: technical terms in chemistry, for example, are clearly not the province of the English teacher, although the general concept of a technical term undoubtedly is his province. But for the English teacher to ignore the language of science, rather as if the mathematics teacher were to leave to the teacher of geography all those aspects of mathematics which were relevant to his subject, can only make things more difficult for all concerned; the science teacher cannot relate what he has to say about the language of scientific experiment to the English language as a whole, or to the child's experience of it. He cannot, in fact, except to the extent that he has deliberately made himself a linguist, teach "scientific English", even in isolation from the rest of the language, in any systematic or structured way. He knows what is acceptable to him and what is not, but that is no more a qualification for teaching the pupils about the English language than the fact that I know what dishes are acceptable to me and what are not qualifies me to teach cookery.

It needs no linguistics to point out that teaching the English language is a highly specialized task, perhaps the most important one in the school, and that only the professionally trained English language teacher can perform it. If it is left in the hands of amateurs – and the English literature specialist who has no linguistic training is almost as much an amateur in this context as is the scientist or mathematician – we can expect the result to be a nation of inarticulates, just as a nation of innumerates would result if mathematics teachers were not trained in mathematics. This is not to question either the importance of the study of English literature or the essential part played by it in the pupil's total experience of the language, nor is it to suggest that the teacher of "English literature" and "English language" cannot and should not be one and the same person. The teaching of literature equally demands a professional approach. But this has always been realized, and the training of the English teacher has equipped him with the necessary knowledge and awareness. It has not usually equipped him to teach the language, which has remained a field for the more or less enthusiastic amateur. The 'English as a foreign language' profession has recognized that it is not enough to be a native speaker of a language (indeed, it may almost be a handicap) in order to teach it to foreigners; the 'English as a native language' profession has perhaps still to appreciate that it is not enough to be able to read and enjoy a poem in order to teach the English language to English children.

The English teacher, in fact, if he is regarded as having any responsibility for his pupils' effective mastery of the language, needs to know his underlying discipline in the same way as does any other teacher, to at least the same extent, and the relevant underlying discipline here is linguistics. We are accustomed to reiterating, in the context of our anti-intellectual tradition, the truth – by now a commonplace – that to know a subject does not qualify one to teach it, and this may sometimes lead us to ignore the equally important truth that not to know a subject disqualifies one from teaching it at all adequately. The mathematics graduate who has not done his teacher training may be a menace as a teacher of arithmetic, but nothing would be gained from replacing him by a 'Dip.Ed.' who knows no mathematics. In other words, the teacher of mathematics is a mathematician as well as a teacher, and the teacher of languages, native or foreign, is likewise himself a linguist.

It is worth insisting on this point because the teacher of the native language cannot really define the aims of his work except in the light of what he knows from linguistics about the nature of language and the uses to which it is put. This is not, of course, to say that he is going to teach what he knows about the nature of language to his pupils. Nowhere is the distinction between what the teacher knows – or should know – and what he teaches more vital than in the teaching of the native language. This distinction, obvious as it is, is sometimes forgotten or blurred in the course of educational discussions. The tradition in some colleges of education is to concentrate nearly all the attention on what the teacher is to put over in the classroom; this, like the equally one-sided attention paid to background subjects in some others, has in the past no doubt often been due to pressure of time. But neither extreme is desirable, since both imply that whatever the teacher knows is for him to impart to his pupils. This attitude, whether it takes the form of scholarship without methodology or of methodology without scholarship, is surely one of the shortest roads to educational suicide. The language teacher especially, perhaps, is like an iceberg, with never more that a small fraction of what he knows showing above the surface.

Linguistics is relevant as something for the teacher to know, whether he is teaching the native language or a foreign language, living or dead. How much of it appears above the surface in his teaching is another matter, which can best be examined in the light of what are regarded as the aims of native language teaching. By and large, there are two possible types of aim, which we may call the "productive" and the "descriptive". The productive is the 'skill' side of the subject: the increasing of the pupil's competence in his native language, both the spoken and the

written skills, including as an essential component the ability to use the language appropriately and effectively for a wide range of different purposes. The descriptive is the 'content' side of the subject: the under-standing of how the language works, of what makes it effective as a means of social interaction, and of the properties of language in general as distinct from those of English in particular. There is no real division here into 'vocational' and 'educational' aims, since both components embrace both: control of the resources of one's native language is as much part of the equipment of the citizen as of the wage-earner, while an understanding of these resources has practical value, for example in drafting and interpreting technical instructions or in the learning of foreign languages, as well as more "cultural" applications – the most important of which is in the appreciation of literature, which perhaps more than anything else points to the inclusion at some level of a descriptive component in the teaching of the native language.

In parenthesis, one should here recognize a third component, the "prescriptive", which consists in teaching linguistic table-manners. It is useful to distinguish prescriptive from productive teaching: unlike the latter, the former adds nothing to the pupil's linguistic abilities; it makes his performance more socially acceptable. To say, as most teachers would agree, that prescriptive teaching has been greatly overstressed in the past is not to deny that it has a place in the teaching of the native language; we all have to be taught to conform, and in fact after a certain age the pupil will accept this as an explicit motive for learning, since it is the only one that makes sense in the context. But this is, or should be, only a very minor part of the total activity of the English class; and it should perhaps not figure at all in public examinations. Indeed, if there is one aspect of English teaching that can safely be taken out of the hands of the English teacher, it is this one, since it needs no specialist knowledge at all.

The language teacher, then, is faced with the need to define the aims of his teaching, to formulate in general terms the range of competence that he expects the pupils to reach by a given stage, and to decide how far "descriptive" teaching has a place either in its own right or as an aid to "productive" attainments. Most important of all, he has to carry out the tasks as he recognizes them to be. This is the context in which to pose the question how much linguistics the English teacher would find it useful to know, and what branches of the subject are relevant to him.

Primarily, he would find it useful to be acquainted with those areas of linguistics that would enable him to interpret and evaluate descriptions of and observations about languages, principally, of course, the language being taught. This means understanding the strengths and weaknesses of

our grammatical tradition, the contributions of modern structuralism to our knowledge of the mechanisms of languages, and the importance of the concept of an explicit description. It also means an awareness of the different kinds of patterning in language – grammatical, lexical, and so on – and of the relation among these various "levels". Moreover, he should be able to listen objectively, and to operate accurately with at least a limited range of phonetic concepts. In other words, it is helpful for English teachers to have some knowledge of "descriptive linguistics", the branch of the subject that is concerned with the organization and meaning of language. This is not merely something that might occasion- ally come in useful, but something that helps to shape and clarify one's understanding of and attitude to language (not least the language of literature); moreover many questions of the sort that the English teacher may have to answer every day demand very considerable linguistic sophistication. Why, for instance, is a particular sentence written by a pupil ambiguous, and is its ambiguity inherent in its own structure or a result of inadequate contextualization? At a higher level, he may need to explain the principles and structure of a dictionary, or to give an accurate account of the rhythm of a line of poetry.

Scarcely less important than the study of language structure, to the teacher of the native language, is the sociological aspect of language: what has been defined as 'the relation between a language and its speakers'. This has been called "institutional linguistics"; under the name "sociolinguistics" it has become a separate, border discipline, linking lin- guistics and sociology. There is no hard and fast line between descriptive and institutional linguistics, but the latter would include two areas of particular relevance: the study of varieties within a language, both dia- lects and "registers", and the study of the status of a language in the community, including the attitudes adopted towards it by those who speak and write it.

The distinction between dialect and register is a useful one for the English teacher: the dialect being defined 'according to the user' (the dialect you use is determined, by and large, by who you are), the register being 'according to the use' (determined by what you are using the language for). Note that "standard English" is a dialect like any other socioregional variety. The individual may speak in many dialects, in a linguistically complex community such as ours, but if so this reflects his personal history; he must certainly, however, speak (and write) in many registers, to be a citizen of the community at all. Of course, there is such a thing as 'the English language', and one should not exaggerate the differences among its varieties; nevertheless there are differences between