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Issues in Applied Linguistics

Title
Applied Linguistics and Language Minorities

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2f98v7k5

Journal
Issues in Applied Linguistics, 6(1)

ISSN
1050-4273

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Publication Date
1995-06-30

DOI
10.5070/L461005204

Peer reviewed

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Editorial

Applied Linguistics and Language Minorities

I

> The United States is more interesting than it sometimes lets itself admit. One does not have to go to India or New Guinea for diversity of language.
>
> Dell Hymes

How does one 'apply' linguistics? More specifically, how does one apply linguistics to 'language minorities?' As the articles and interviews in this issue demonstrate, applying linguistics to language minorities involves examining not only the structure of the language being used, but also the ways that language is put to use within a particular speech community. Thus, while this issue includes discussion of Hmong, Lakhota, Spanish, Chicano English, and African American English speakers, the authors go beyond examining these languages and dialects as systems detached from the community in which they are used; each researcher analyzes the necessarily situated use of language. In this way, these scholars 'apply linguistics' to a particular communicative situation in order to understand more implicit linguistic subtleties or underlying social patterns.

The analysis of situated language frequently reveals that generalizations of theoretical linguistics fail to do justice to language as it is used in authentic interaction. As Sara Trechter's article on Lakhota gendered clitics makes clear, looking at both the structure of Lakhota as well as its particular communicative setting can greatly expand an understanding of the Lakhota language. In this way, Trechter's work goes beyond the stereotypical assumptions about the use of gendered forms in Native American languages. By applying linguistic analysis to recordings of speech from a variety of settings, this article presents non-typical speech examples which display the inherent creativity behind the use of forms previously considered to be "categorically" gendered.

The variety of *ways* in which languages are used adds a new level of meaning to the phrase "language diversity." As Michael Findlay's article on Hmong students in monolingual classrooms demonstrates, even if everyone in a classroom is speaking English, there is a difference in the *kinds* of English being spoken. While Hmong students may understand the words the teacher is speaking, they frequently do not share the cultural assumptions behind those words, and as a result, Hmong students may fail to achieve their academic

Issues in Applied Linguistics ISSN 1050-4273
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Vol. 5. No. 2 1995 1-3

potential. In contrast, the school discussed in Rebecca Freeman's article struggles to provide "equal educational opportunity" through a bilingual English/Spanish program. As applied linguistic analysis demonstrates, however, education at this school is not always as 'equal' as the ideals of its practitioners suggest. While the staff and faculty work hard to create equal opportunities in Spanish and English, the framing of questions in the classroom occasionally reveals that English, even in these classrooms is the language of "privilege." In this study, while teachers clearly teach students to use both English and Spanish, the *way* these languages are spoken provides clues into underlying societal biases.

African American English and Chicano English, as discussed by Marcyliena Morgan and Otto Santa Ana, further exemplify Hymes' definition of languages not as systems isolated from their social origins, but as "ways of speaking" (1981). Both of these scholars emphasize the need to see 'non-standard' forms of English in their full complexity, and this perspective necessarily leads them to conduct research which explores not only the structure, but also the historical and social origins of Chicano and African American English varieties. Morgan's discussion of African American "counterlanguage" further demonstrates how the use of a language variety can simultaneously display membership in a particular community as well as contest the speech and assumptions of the dominant discourse. Santa Ana's discussion of "language attitudes" similarly addresses the inherent political choices involved in speaking a particular variety.

All of these articles and interviews combine to form a collective call for scholars and language teachers to take stock of their own assumptions about language and to further explore its complexities. The book reviews in this issue echo this call: Reviews by Scarlett Robbins and Zoë Argyres discuss books which encourage language teachers and scholars to look into the research on second language acquisition which debunks common myths about language learning. Patricia Baquedano-López, Kylie Hsu, and Tanya Stivers all review books which address issues of culture in the language classroom.

Even this short volume supports Hymes' observation that "one does not have to go to India or New Guinea for diversity of language." The United States, however, has not only a diversity of languages, but a plethora of controversy surrounding their use. Currently, bilingual education and affirmative action have both fallen into disfavor and proposition 187, passed this year in California, has become an emblem of current anti-immigration sentiment. These 'developments' could portend a decrease in our country's language diversity, but as the work in this volume suggests, language variety will always persist in some form. Applied linguistic study of language minorities combines an understanding of the complexity of language with an exploration of the diversity of life around us in order to, in Morgan's words "show, demonstrate, reveal to the world what's going on within a particular group, society, culture." One hopes that from such revelations, a deeper appreciation of both human and linguistic variety can emerge.

II

Between thought and expression lies a lifetime.
Lou Reed

This issue of *ial* marks the end of our co-editorship, as Susan will be spending the coming year in Japan. As co-editors we have worked to bring both of our own interests to bear on the work included in the journal while continuing to maintain *ial* as a forum for new issues. We have also extended the mission of *ial* by actively encouraging cross-disciplinary contributions and publishing thematic issues unified by current areas of interest rather than academic discipline. While Susan is leaving to pursue her linguistic interests this year in Japan, East Asian linguistics has found a prominent position here in *ial:* Our previous special issue: "Applied Linguistics from an East Asian Perspective," has received tremendous response: Upon publication, requests arrived nearly daily from around the world.

The current special issue continues our efforts to attract a diversity of readers, as well as contributors. While officially titled "Sociolinguistics and Language Minorities," this issue includes articles and book reviews from the fields of Anthropology, English, and Education, as well as TESL and Applied Linguistics. *Ial* continues to be a respected journal of Applied Linguistics and now other fields are beginning to become substantially involved as well.

In the coming year, Betsy will continue as editor of *ial*, publishing another thematic issue, "Discourse-based Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition" in December. Creating a publication for Applied Linguistics which confronts issues and encourages cross-disciplinary involvement will continue to be a challenge and, as the epigraph suggests, an experiment in expression which will evolve throughout the entire lifetime of the journal.

June 1995 Betsy Rymes and Susan Strauss

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