

# Current Situation and Development Trend of Applied Linguistics

Fang Li

Zhengzhou Vocational College of Industrial Safety

Zhengzhou, 451192, China

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**Abstract.** Applied linguistics is an interdisciplinary subject and has wide development prospect. This paper will focus on research status of applied linguistics to carry out detailed discussion and analysis, infer its development trend according to its origin, subject nature and research scope and finally summarize applied linguistics will develop into a new research subject and systematic study project with comprehensive and pioneering nature.

## 1. Foreword

As an important constituent part of modern linguistics circle, applied linguistics is a burgeoning subject and covers a wide research range. Research questions are also complex and diversified. So, applied linguistics has become one of hot research topics in current linguistics circle and owns a great development prospect and innovation value. In fact, applied linguistics is an independent subject which grew in 1960s. It has extensive connections with many subjects, so it has the peculiarity of interdisciplinary subject. We should conduct theoretical research of it and put it into actions so that its application characteristics can be better exerted. So, it can develop in a more healthy way.

## 2. Origin and classification of applied linguistics

Researches about language application began in the 19th century, but nobody formally proposed the concept of applied linguistics until 1970s. From 1940s, applied linguistics gained formal and extensive applications. Its main function is to rationally handle and differentiate the relationship between it and theoretical linguistics. In essence, applied linguistics is to apply and practice some knowledge of theoretical linguistics. As linguistic researches continuously deepen and expand, many interdisciplinary subjects emerge continuously. This also makes research range of applied linguistics becomes increasingly extensive. As the first International Linguistics Conference is convoked, the research range of applied linguistics expands continuously. Thus, it gradually forms an independent subject.

In fact, applied linguistics can be classified into narrow and broad types after development for so many years. In a narrow sense, applied linguistics refers to foreign language teaching or language teaching. It mainly applies theoretical linguistics in foreign language training and foreign language teaching and gradually becomes a thinking set in people's mind under the effect of some historical factors. It is a need of era development and accords with development rules of linguistics. It is a subject studying foreign language teaching and learning. So, applied linguistics

gradually becomes an advantage in foreign language learning. In a broad sense, applied linguistics is a product of theoretical knowledge of linguistics which combines social practice in long-term social development. In other words, linguistic theory crosses with other subjects and penetrates mutually, and finally a brand-new applied interdisciplinary subject forms.

### **3. Interdisciplinary subject and research range of applied linguistics**

Applied linguistics has suffered controversies since its birth. No uniform and fixed subject definition has formed so far. The most pivotal controversy is the relationship between applied linguistics and linguistics. People consider applied linguistics is linguistics in applications. In other words, theoretical knowledge of linguistics is applied in other related fields. The representative figure is Corder from University of Edinburgh. In his opinion, applied linguistics is not a subject research, but a pure technological means based on linguistics. In fact, his idea is one-sided and defective. Applied linguistics actually belongs to an independent subject. It owns certain cross nature and interdisciplinary nature and belongs to a new research category. It is not simple superposition of application and linguistics. It is different from linguistics and does not belong to linguistics. It is actually an interdisciplinary study field with strong cross nature. Its research theories and methods come from multiple subjects, such as psychology and pedagogy. This is a special point of applied linguistics.

Applied linguistics actually refers to applying linguistic theory, other descriptions and skills in foreign language teaching. It can be not just applied in various language subjects, but also applied in some interdisciplinary subjects related to linguistics. Therefore, applied linguistics can be applied in all subjects related to language teaching. In view of this, many scholars consider applied linguistics is a compressive subject which integrates multiple subjects. The research range of applied linguistics is also wide. It is a transformation and realization process from theory to practice so as to provide explanatory framework and support for language activities. Since applied linguistics is classified into narrow and broad types, its research range is also related to the two types. In a broad sense, applied linguistics mainly studies linguistic theories, descriptions and skills to solve related problems, such as machine translation. In a narrow sense, applied linguistics specially refers to foreign language teaching or second language teaching. But, even so, there is no consistent definition of applied linguistics in the world. Hence, the research range of applied linguistics is not consistently approved. Especially after its range expands continuously, some burgeoning research fields are not accepted to be the research category of applied linguistics.

### **4. Current situation and development trend of applied linguistics**

Although we say applied linguistics belongs to a new subject with extensive research scope, it occupies an irreplaceable important position in contemporary linguistic researches to a large extent and owns great practicability value. Applied linguistics has interdisciplinarity and permeability. Besides, it changes and develops with social

changes, so it owns dynamic nature. Therefore, we analyze development trend of applied linguistics.

(1) Applied linguistics continuously pushes out and establishes new theories. Applied linguistics becomes a relatively independent subject after development for some time. Many linguists and applied linguists establish many new theories, including cognitive theory. Cognitive theory pushes applied linguistics study to a new height. So, applied linguistics study has developed to the stage of cognitive theory and social constructivist theory. They represent relatively advanced linguistic research theories in the world. Cognitive theory school plays an important promotion role for development of applied linguistics. It advocates learners' learning subjectivity and creativity and considers language study is an active activity process. Learners are required to think independently through self-observation and exploration and finally master an inquiry-based learning method. But, cognitive theory neglects researched on nonintellectual factors. It regards foreign language learning as an isolated individual behavior and overlooks environmental factors in learning and especially socio-cultural environment where learners are in. Social constructivist theory makes up for this shortcoming. It stresses equal importance of social environment and cultural knowledge and holds knowledge acquisition is the result of learners' contact and interactions in specific social environment. It has great enlightenment on linguistics teaching practice and theoretical teaching and provides a new opportunity for applied linguistics development.

(2) The development process of applied linguistics is human socialization process. Because social constructivist theory regards language as an important constituent part of social semantic system, language learners are important members in whole social group. Their ways of thinking and learning strategies will be restricted and influenced by specific social culture and social norms. From this perspective, learners' specific socio-cultural background and learning environment are closely related to cultivation and improvement of their language cognition competence. That is, interactions between learners and their surroundings will ultimately result in development of language cognition competence and language competence. In foreign language teaching, the process of interactions between teachers and students and among students is actually language knowledge accumulation or construction process from the perspective of applied linguistics. Besides, it is also a process of cultivation and improvement of learners' language competence. In this process, learner's level can be classified into existing development level and potential development level. The space between the two is the zone of proximal development. Only when learners surpass this zone can they acquire new language competence. So, the zone of proximal development is the key for learners to gain and apply language knowledge. Moreover, learners must interact with society based on their existing knowledge so as to drive development of their language knowledge and ability. Besides, they can test their new knowledge and new ability, and cultivate their cooperative learning consciousness and ability. This can not just help learners gain knowledge, but promote improvement of their psychological health and comprehensive quality.

(3) The development of applied linguistics requires knowing social cultures of various countries. Research and development trend of applied linguistics need to

improve learners' social and culture consciousness, and attach importance to socio-cultural background of target language countries so as to provide a, interactive and penetrative possibility platform for language study and application. Applied linguistics is a multi-disciplinary aggregation and involves a wide range, and the research fields are complex and diversified. In view of these, in foreign language teaching, we should introduce more teaching theories in teaching process on the basis of comprehensiveness, openness and scientificity of applied linguistics so as to make foreign language teaching process more diversified and teaching strategies more flexible and make linguistic theory reflect its huge values in actual teaching process. Actually, in language learning process, language learners not just need to cooperate with their cognitive competence and emotional factors, but also need certain support from learning environment and socio-cultural environment. The organic combination of the two can really promote learners to improve their language competence. From this perspective, the development trend of applied linguistics will be a fusion of cognitive theory and social constructivist theory. Such development trend has great enlightenment for theoretical and practical research of applied linguistics. To be more specific, it will facilitate research category of applied linguistics to turn to diversified theoretical research mode from unary theoretical research mode and carry out a series of cooperative researches with interdisciplinary subjects and realize innovation of new research modes and methods. Besides, it will make research fields of applied linguistics become wide, continuously update foreign language teaching idea and teaching mode and make foreign language teacher face larger teaching pressure. Additionally, applied linguistics will make China's foreign language teaching become the research core of social educational circle under international background, and propose higher requirements and expectations for foreign language teachers. In particular, cooperative study of cross-school, cross-subject and cross-major experts and scholars will become an inevitable development trend.

## **5. Future challenges and countermeasures of applied linguistics study**

With social progress and development, language will certainly change and develop subtly. Many scholars quite value linguistics study and pay more attention to researches of burgeoning applied linguistics. Applied linguistics is continuously expanding its research range. Many linguistics subjects and relevant interdisciplinary subjects are fully utilized by applied linguistics. It thus can be seen that development space of applied linguistics is enormous. It has strong comprehensiveness and cross nature. These are its advantages. On the other hand, these are also its disadvantages, because these make it faced with large development challenges. Such challenges are mainly reflected in various problems and difficulties caused by interdisciplinarity, experiment and openness of applied linguistics. Firstly, research and development of applied linguistics cannot be separated from participation and penetration of multiple subjects. This needs researches own knowledge and abilities in many aspects. In fact, disciplinary knowledge of many language researchers and workers is not comprehensive enough. These seriously affect research and development of applied linguistics. These language researchers cannot really go deep into research fields of

English linguistics, thus restricting development of applied linguistics. Besides, theoretical research of applied linguistics still belongs to an emerging interdisciplinary subject. Its theoretical development is not very smooth. So, this subject encounters many barriers in development process.

In allusion to such development challenges, we should clearly cognize although applied linguistics is not mature enough and the research task is arduous, it is an Irreplaceable important research project. So, we must face the difficulties, strive to do follow-up interdisciplinary study well and drive it to better comply with era development requirements. Besides, we should handle many problems based on its dynamic nature, openness and cross nature, organically combine knowledge in each aspect and fulfill innovation of theoretical research and application practice. In fact, in accordance with research status and development trend of applied linguistics, we consider applied linguistics may develop toward three directions; theory, thought and practice. Theoretically, it may develop into a thorough theoretical system. At the thought level, it may be occupied by ideology and other political forms. In practice, it may focus on education of language teachers and future teacher education.

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