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## Foreword

### A Journal Is Born

As the growing field of applied linguistics develops new areas of interest and new graduate programs, a concomitant need arises for more channels of communication through which colleagues and researchers can publicize current research and exchange ideas. In response to this obvious need for additional avenues of publication, and especially to encourage students to publish their work, the graduate students of the Department of TESL & Applied Linguistics at UCLA have undertaken a new semi-annual journal, *Issues in Applied Linguistics*. Since the journal is partly funded by the UCLA Graduate Student Association, at least 66% of each issue's contributions will be authored by students. Thus, in addition to providing established applied linguists with another outlet for research publication, the journal will be an ideal vehicle for student essays, research papers and articles which are based on theses and dissertations.

It is with great pride and enthusiasm, then, that the Department of TESL & Applied Linguistics salutes its graduate students in launching this new publication.

**John Schumann**, Chair  
Department of TESL & Applied Linguistics  
University of California, Los Angeles

## Editorial

### The Unsung Melodies of Applied Linguistics

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Interdisciplinary work, so much discussed these days, is not about confronting already consulted disciplines (none of which, in fact, is willing to let itself go). To do something interdisciplinary it's not enough to choose a "subject" (a theme) and gather around it two or three sciences. Interdisciplinarity consists in creating a new object that belongs to no one.

Roland Barthes

*Bruissement de la langue*

Applied linguistics has now emerged as an interdisciplinary field of inquiry with its own authority and rhetoric having spread to many areas where "language" has become an object of description, critique and evaluation. In the last three decades, the professional enterprise of this field has changed (but regrettably, not for some) from its early agenda of the "scientific" study of the principles and practices of foreign language teaching and learning as well as the seeking and finding of better methods, materials and testing, in ESL mainly, to a more complex, diverse endeavor which analyzes past and present practices out of a commitment to future possibilities. The field now combines and fuses, from seemingly incompatible areas of inquiry, knowledge which not only changes and shapes investigations that applied linguists undertake, but which also helps situate the field in a unique domain and creates new knowledge.

But, as Barthes (1986) argues, by merely using knowledge from several disciplines to inform our activities we are not truly being interdisciplinary; applied linguistics needs to have its own distinct flavor and specialty. In order to do this, however, applied

linguists need to re-examine their dependence on Western science's search for universal principles with objective methods, a search which has excluded certain expressive modes from its mainstream canon, localizing them in marginal islands of research or in disciplines such as film and fiction. Among the expressive modes that have been pushed to the periphery during the last three decades are cultural specificity and subjectivity.

For example, triggered by Chomskian linguistic theory, applied linguists have produced mountains of acquisition research, comprehensively ignoring "linguistic variation as the substance" (Bickerton, 1973, p. 643) of inquiry and relegating it instead to the periphery of language study. Some second language acquisition research has even treated interlanguage phenomena as "inferior, ... gibberish," or as "mindless ungrammatical chatter" (James, 1985). Finally, language pedagogy has suffered from a similar bias. There have been numerous attempts to find a single universally acceptable teaching method (from the audio-lingual method to the communicative and the natural approaches), with uneven success across diverse cultural settings, whereas more culturally appropriate methodologies have been remarkably successful (see, e.g., Sharp & Gallimore, 1989).

In addition, applied linguists who generally employ experimental methods, preferring to reduce people, learning and objects with unique identities to statistics and diagrams, attempt to observe and evaluate from a detached, transcendent position. Moreover, and regrettably, when subjective experiences and observations form a part of these inquiries (which is rare), they are included apologetically with expressions of concern that personal opinions, feelings and beliefs have no true place in applied linguistics research.

To call for the re-instatement of culturally specific and subjective voices, the *unsung melodies* of applied linguistics, does not, however, mean one must advocate the extreme position of privileging one set of voices over the other. While there is a need for these other voices to be heard, they would of course have to be subject to the same spirit of critical evaluation as any other position would be in the field. Applied linguistics should therefore promote the cooperation and collaboration of voices and offer a perspectival relativity in which no one theory has the final word. What I am suggesting is the Bakhtinian notion of *polyphony* in which all voices remain independent yet combine in a unity of order higher than mere homophony. As in Tyler's (1986) metaphorical

characterization, polyphony can also evoke not only pictures and seeing, sequence and line, but also sound and hearing, simultaneity and harmony.

The epistemological implication of such a position is that applied linguists should perhaps not seek a unified Popperian realm of truth, but rather favor a Feyerabendian dissatisfaction with method because any epistemology must be seen only as an historical event and as a distinctive social practice defined differently by every culture. This is not to argue that applied linguistics, therefore, needs an additional theory of indigenous epistemologies or a new epistemology of the Other in every culture in which applied linguistics is practiced. Instead, what is needed is that the West be anthropologized -- shown "how exotic its constitution of reality has been," (Rainbow, 1986, p. 41) how those domains most taken for granted as universal are historically peculiar and how claims to truth are linked to cultural and social practices -- just as non-Western cultures have been for so long.

## 2

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.

T.S. Eliot  
*Little Gidding*

In this inaugural issue of *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, we present polyphonic voices from our interdisciplinary field through four main articles, an interview and six book reviews. Our ten male and six female authors are from different geographical locales: Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, India, Japan, Nigeria, the United Kingdom and the United States. They represent both students and faculty from diverse areas of specialization: bilingual education, cognitive psychology, cognitive science, cultural politics, language teaching, language testing, linguistics, literature, second language acquisition and speech communication. Moreover, the four main articles represent a range of voices from the positivist and interpretive research traditions.

Alastair Pennycook's paper forcefully argues the need for a critical applied linguistics for the 1990s. He points out the limitations imposed by asocial, ahistorical and apolitical modes of inquiry on the domain of second language education and urges us to seek a critical applied linguistics that is responsive to its social, cultural and political contexts. Through a brief survey of critical developments in other fields of inquiry, including social science and education, Pennycook suggests that applied linguistics is lagging behind other disciplines in adopting new ways of thinking about what it studies and how it goes about doing its work. His critique places him among those who are concerned with alternative programs of research, with the humanization of pedagogy, and with the feminist and post-colonial condition.

Lyle Bachman, Fred Davidson and John Foulkes report on a two-year study of performance on ESL proficiency tests. Their comparison of test takers' abilities as measured by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) and Educational Testing Service (ETS) test batteries shows that the abilities measured by both test batteries are, to a large degree, similar for the sample of subjects in the study. This finding is important because the two organizations arguably represent opposing viewpoints in test construction and validation: linguistic and subjective procedures (UCLES) and psychometric and objective procedures (ETS). They conclude their paper with future plans for triangulating information from test performance, test content analysis and test takers' background, using both subjective and objective methods. These plans place the authors in a newly emerging approach to test construction and validation, which uses more information in its analyses than previous approaches have done.

Don Rubin, Rosemarie Goodrum and Barbara Hall argue that ESL learners from oral-based cultures need not completely divorce themselves from their native rhetorical patterns when they learn to write for academic purposes in English, but can instead learn to capitalize on many oral-based discourse strategies in their second-language written communication. This position opposes views based on the interference model which has encouraged the suppression of native linguistic and rhetorical abilities in order to achieve competence in a target culture's discourse. The authors support their thesis not only with arguments in favor of cultural pluralism, but also with findings from research on native language transitions from orality to literacy. Their work places them among

others who are concerned with writing instruction for minorities and the socially disadvantaged, literacy among children and adults, and cross-cultural rhetoric and discourse.

Yasuhiro Shirai investigates the relationship between prototype and frequency of use with the polysemous basic verb PUT. Having derived the prototype from native speakers of English, he compares this prototype with the meanings of PUT as used in an oral and a written corpus of English. Shirai's major finding, that the prototype of PUT does not correspond to the frequency of actual use, has implications both for prototype theory and for the status of native-speaker intuitions in lexico-semantic analysis. This study places the author's work in the growing areas of data-based semantic analysis and corpus linguistics.

Maria Egbert's interview with Evelyn Hatch, professor emerita of the UCLA Department of TESL & Applied Linguistics, offers us a view of the personal side of a researcher, author and teacher who has otherwise been known mainly through her writing in second language acquisition, psycholinguistics and research methodology. In addition, Evelyn shares her perspectives on being both a female researcher and an educator of future researchers. She also comments on current research in a number of areas including language processing and the linear additive model.

The six reviewers featured in this issue evaluate books from a wide range of areas in applied linguistics: second language acquisition and universal grammar (Donna Lardiere), cognitive psychology and learning strategies (Swathi Vanniarajan), bilingual education and literacy (Carol Benson), literature in ESL pedagogy (John Povey), linguistics (Stephen Adewole) and cognitive science (Cheryl Fantuzzi).

In closing, may I urge our readers to send in their views on the two questions we pose in our special features section for the next issue. These contributions will add more polyphonic voices, and, if we accept Rorty's (1979) suggestion that free communication and civilized conversation are the ultimate goals in inquiry, we will have made an excellent beginning. Finally, as Eliot wrote in *Little Gidding*, though probably with insufficient optimism for the positivists among us, we will "arrive where we started" and return to these fundamental questions once again next time.

June 1990

Antony John Kunnan  
Editor

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**Antony John Kunnan**, Editor of *JAL*, is a doctoral student in applied linguistics at UCLA. He holds masters' degrees in literature and applied linguistics, has co-authored five academic ESL texts, has taught applied linguistics, ESL and literature, and has also worked as a freelance journalist. Currently, he is a research associate on a joint UCLA-University of Cambridge language testing project.

## Towards a Critical Applied Linguistics for the 1990s

Alastair Pennycook  
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*Like many other areas of the social sciences, applied linguistics developed into its present form during the age of high modernism. Yet, while many other areas are going through a difficult stage of reappraisal in response to postmodern critiques of modernism, applied linguistics has remained to date steadfastly bound to its modernist paradigm. The significance of the challenges to this mode of thinking, however, suggests that applied linguistics urgently needs to look afresh at its view of language and research, and to acknowledge new thinking on discourse, the subject, culture, objectivity and knowledge. Applied linguistics also needs to address the fundamental limitations of a social, ahistorical and apolitical modes of inquiry for the highly political domain of second language education. What I am arguing for here is a pedagogically and politically engaged critical applied linguistics which is responsive to its social, cultural and political context and which uses a notion of transformative critique as its main mode of inquiry.*

## INTRODUCTION

We live in a world marked by fundamental inequalities: a world in which 40,000 children die every day in Third World countries; a world in which, in almost every society and culture, differences constructed around gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, sexual preference and other distinctions lead to massive inequalities; a world increasingly threatened by pollution and ecological disaster. I believe that to understand such inequalities we need to go beyond a view of politics as residing in the hands of nation states or "political leaders" and to understand ourselves within a set of global power