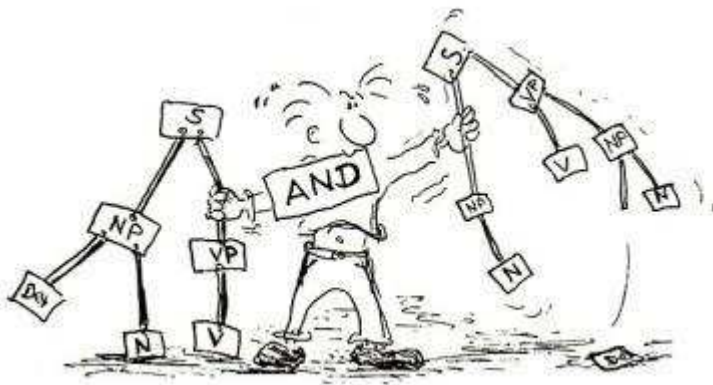# Applied linguistics for Language Teachers
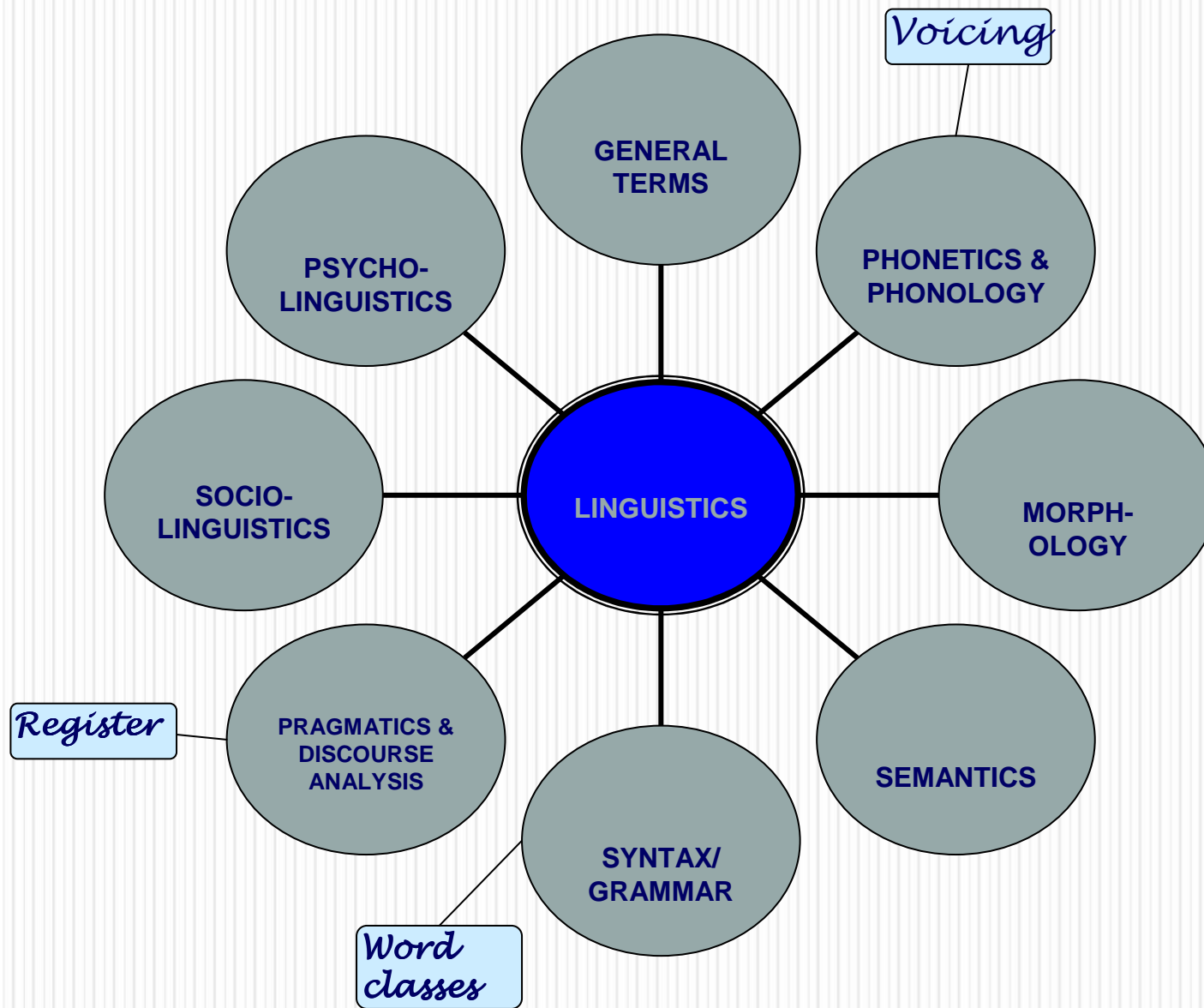
David Newby

Alan Maley on theory & practice

'Theory is when we know everything but nothing works. Practice is when everything works but no one knows why. We have combined theory and practice: nothing works and no one knows why!'

(Maley, 1991:23)

Terms/theoretical concepts that teachers need to understand	
Terms/theoretical concepts that students need to understand	
Terms/theoretical concepts not relevant to teaching	
Theoretical aspects I need for my teaching but have been missing so far from my linguistic courses so far	

125 PRESENT PERFECT: EXPERIENCE & PAST EVENTS
(76 A & 70) ⇨

Look at the grammar box below and then do the exercise.

Grammar in Combination

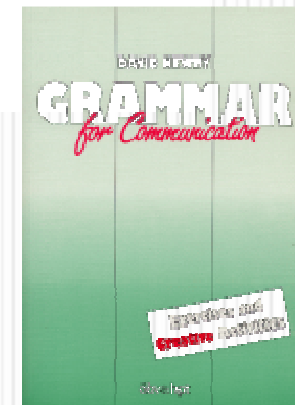A: **Have** you **been** to America?
B: Yes, I **have**. I **'ve been** there twice.
A: **Did** you **like** it?
B: Yes, it **was** super!

EXPERIENCE: Present perfect
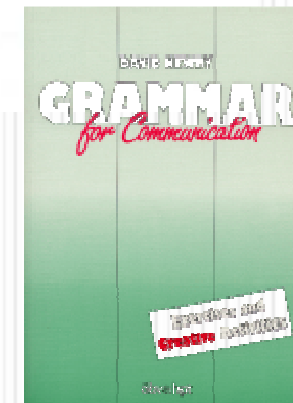– I **have been** there three times.
DETAILS: Past tense
– The first time **was** in 1986.

Use the notes below to write dialogues. (Make up the last few dialogues yourself.)

Example:
1. A: (hold snake?)   *Have you ever held a snake?*
   B: (yes – two)   *Yes, I have. I've held two.*
   A: (where?)   *Where did you hold them?*
   B: (pet shop – garden) *The first time was in a pet shop and the second was when I found one in my garden.*

2. A: (helicopter?)
   B: (no)
   A: (aeroplane?)
   B: (yes)
   A: (where?)
   B: (Australia)
   A: (what do?)
   B: (uncle)

3. A: (read 'Murder on the
         Orient Express'?)
   B: (yes)
   A: (like?)
   B: (super)
   A: (see film?)
   B: (yes)
   A: (like?)
   B: (boring)

4. A: (sleep in open air?)
   B: (3x)
5. A: (stay up all night?)
   B: (2x)
6. (find any money?)
7. (pop concert?)
8. (bitten by dog?)

linguistics – applied linguistics – learning/teaching

- a) **systemic linguistics** (syntax, morphology, semantics, phonology)
- b) **use-based linguistics** (pragmatics, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics etc.)
- c) **applied linguistics**
- d) **language teaching** = 'the real world' (Widdowson, 2000)

The role of the applied linguist

The role of applied linguists may vary according to their aims and orientation. The following general roles can be identified:

1. linguistics applied
2. linguistics mediated
3. applied linguistics

1.   **linguistics applied a) → c) → d)**

    a) systemic linguistics →
    c) applied linguistics →
    d) language teaching

'… asking teachers to weigh the insights of academics' (Bell, 1981: 14)

'the applied linguist is a consumer, or user, not a producer, of theories' (Corder's, 1973: 10)

2. linguistics mediated b) ➝ c) ➝ d)

b) use-based linguistics ➝

c) applied linguistics ➝

d) language teaching

'Though not linguistics applied, it is linguistics mediated. And the mediation is (…) across the divide between the disciplinary domains of detached enquiry and that of practical experienced reality, between expertise and experience.' (Widdowson, 2000: 13.)

linguistics – applied linguistics – learning/teaching

3. applied linguistics d) ➝ c) ➝ b)/a)

d) language teaching ➝
c) applied linguistics ➝
b) use-based linguistics/systemic linguistics

(…) applied linguistics has been called a problem-based activity.

(Corder, S.P., 1973: 138)

AL is grounded in real-world, language driven problems and issues.

(Grabe, W. 2002: 11-12).

'A working definition of applied linguistics will then be: the theoretical and empirical investigation of real-world problems in which language is a central issue.'

(Brumfit, 1997: 93)

An Introduction to
Applied Linguistics

From Practice to Theory

ALAN DAVIES

EDINBURGH TEXTBOOKS IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS
SERIES EDITORS: ALAN DAVIES & KEITH MITCHELL

'Broad' domains of AL

- *Language and education*: which includes both first- and second-language learning but also aspects of language impairment such as dyslexia, etc.;

- *Language, work and law*: which includes the analysis of varieties of language used in the workplace, language planning, forensic linguistics (using language analysis as evidence in criminal investigations) etc.;

- *Language, information and effect*: analysis of the media, politics, critical discourse analysis etc..

What do applied linguists do?

1. Developing theories and models
2. Mediating and implementing theories
3. Analysing language for pedagogical application
4. Carrying out research into learning and teaching

Letter to the *Observer* from a Bradford teacher.

seems to be very hung up by the clothes people wear, on her visit to our school she took objection to men wearing white *shalwar kameez* (as good as anything with a Damart vest and long johns) as if the clothes they wear have a negative effect on their parenting. I've taught some lovely lads who wear white *shalwar kameez*. I didn't have time to make judgements about peoples appearance that day, to busy I suppose discussing there childrens progress, I hope they felt the same way about my attire.

I know their are hurdles to jump at our school, but am often inspired by childrens progress and achievement, I hope they are to. When I was at school I thought I was an individual not just a culture, it upset me when I was judged by even my siblings achievements let alone the white race as a whole.

A Bradford teacher,
Name and address witheld

I HAVE LIVED in Bradford for 15 years and taught at a Bradford school for four, my first teaching post.
Katharine Whitehorn

(Original spelling and punctuation have been retained).

… to make judgements about peoples appearance that day, to busy I suppose discussing there childrens progress, I hope they felt the same way about my attire.

I know their are hurdles to jump at our school, but am often inspired by childrens progress and achievement, I hope they are to.

Which of these words are used most frequently by teenagers living in south-east London?

- bloody
- book
- brilliant
- clothes
- dunno
- fuck(ing)
- homework
- money

- mum
- nice
- okay
- sex
- stupid
- teacher
- very

Solution

Word	Order	No.	%	Word	Order	No.	%
Okay	117	862	0.17%	Money	292	237	0.05%
Mum	146	615	0.12%	Stupid	303	220	0.04%
Fucking	176	449	0.09%	Teacher	308	216	0.04%
Very	182	415	0.08%	Book	399	148	0.03%
Nice	188	406	0.08%	Homework	522	99	0.02%
Dunno	216	374	0.07%	Brilliant	571	87	0.02%
Fuck	241	322	0.06%	Clothes	692	69	0.01%
Bloody	258	291	0.06%	Sex	1028	37	/

Who are applied linguists?

- Linguists

- FL Methodologists

- Language teachers – action research

- One person may take on 2 or all 3 roles

# What areas of research do applied linguists focus on?

- Language Systems
- Language Use
- Learning
- Teaching

Or combinations of the above

Language-based research (Systemic)

- Grammatical/language models (cognitive, communication etc.)
- Syllabus design
- Rule formulation
- Objective specification
- Communication Competence
- Exercise design (e.g. grammar, vocabulary)

The Edinburgh school
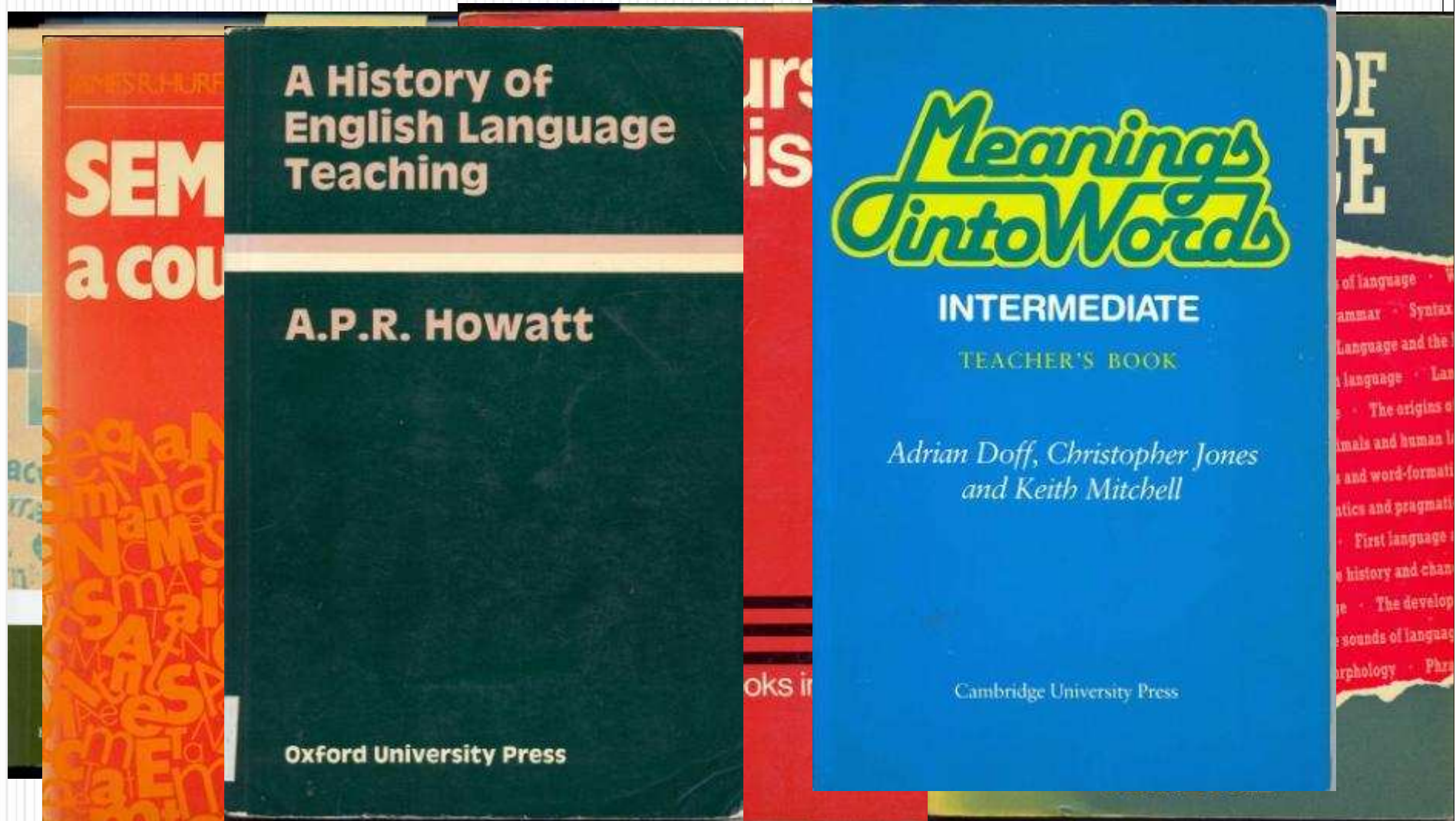
Language use

- Corpus analysis

- Grammar of spoken/written English (McCarthy, Carter)

- Dictionaries (Sinclair, Cobuild Dictionary)

- Language in discourse (conversational analysis, lexical analysis etc.)

Learning & Teaching

- Learning models (Krashen etc.)
- Effectiveness of teaching
- etc.

Volume 19, AILA Review

- Input, Interaction and Output
- the Effects of Form-focussed Instruction on L2 Acquisition
- Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition
- Interlanguage Development
- Conversation Analysis as an Approach to SLA
- Cognitive Perspectives on SLA

McCarthy, *Applied Linguistics* (2001: 8)

8 · Applying linguistics: disciplines, theories, models, descriptions

Language teachers' questions

What is known about the learner's first language or any other language they know which might be interfering with their learning of the foreign language?

What do grammarians say about this structure?

What psychological barriers might be preventing the learning of the structure?

Are some structures difficult to learn if they are tackled too early on? Is there an order in which structures are best presented?

Figure 1: Potential linguistic questions for the solution of a grammatical problem

McCarthy, *Applied Linguistics* (2001: 8)

If we consider another of the problems, that of the dictionary writer looking for alternatives to the alphabetical dictionary, we might imagine a different set of questions, as in Figure 2:

Lexicographic (dictionary-making) questions

- What is the internal structure of the vocabulary of the language(s) I am dealing with?
- What do we know about the mental organisation of vocabulary in human beings? Perhaps this can be utilised in dictionary organisation?
- What problems might a non-native user of the dictionary have with the organising principle chosen?
- What place should information about grammar have in such a dictionary?
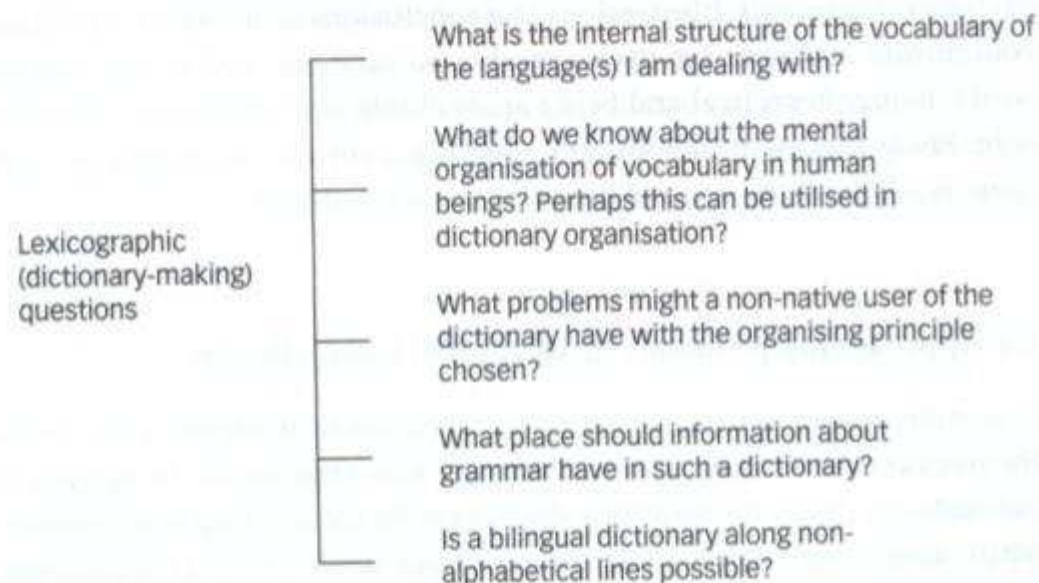- Is a bilingual dictionary along non-alphabetical lines possible?

Figure 2: Potential linguistic questions for the solution of a lexicographic problem

The dictionary writer, like the language teacher, confronts the same basic questions: Can linguistics offer an approach or a solution to the problem at hand? If so, which branch(es) of linguistic study, and by what method(s)?

Some of the areas which we may focus on in this course are:

- Authentic language - standard language, language change, register etc.
- Modelling language
- Communicative competence
- Aims, objectives, needs analysis
- Grammar rules
- Corpus linguistics
- 2nd-language acquisition
- Effectiveness of teaching methods
- Testing and Assessment
- ……..

European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages	SELF ASSESSMENT

C. The Role of the Language Teacher

1. I can draw on appropriate theories of language, learning, culture etc. and relevant research findings to guide my teaching.

2. I can critically assess my teaching in relation to theoretical principles.

3. I can locate relevant articles, journals and research findings relating to aspects of teaching and learning.

4. I can identify and investigate specific pedagogical/ didactic issues related to my learners or my teaching in the form of action research.