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History and Development of EL

The Handbook of Educational Linguistics

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Introduction

Educational linguistics is a field that studies how language and education are connected. It uses the research tools from linguistics and other disciplines of social sciences (like sociology and psychology) to understand issues related to language and education. It began in the early 1970s, proposed by Bernard Spolsky. Educational linguistics is closely linked to applied linguistics. Educational linguistics has its own focus, which is specifically on language issues in education.

1) Applied Linguistics and precursors of educational linguistics

- 1) **1959:** Establishment of the **Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)** to support second language learning.
- 2) **1964:** Formation of **AILA in France** focusing on second language learning and sociolinguistics.
- 3) **1967:** Founding of **BAAL** to study language use, acquisition, and teaching with interdisciplinary cooperation.
- 4) **1970:** Establishment of the **AAAL** to promote applied linguistics research in the United States.

Applied linguistics is now **flourishing worldwide**, with **AILA organizations in 34 countries**, showing that it has become a **global field** closely related to **language pedagogy**, especially **second and foreign language education**. Despite being well established, it has faced an **identity crisis** due to its **uneasy relationship with linguistics** and **uncertainty about its scope**, and applied linguists are often seen as **mediating between theory and practice**.

A key debate is whether it is **multidisciplinary** (drawing ideas from different fields) or **transdisciplinary**, as suggested by **Halliday (2001)**, focusing on **real-world language problems**. In the **1950s**, it included areas such as **grammar teaching, translation, lexicography, language planning, forensic linguistics, and language for specific purposes**, and the establishment of the **Center for Applied Linguistics (1959)** strengthened its link with **language education**, especially with the spread of **English language teaching in the 1960s and 1970s**.

2) The Emergence of Educational Linguistics

Educational linguistics emerged due to problems and controversies about the **scope and nature of applied linguistics**. Spolsky introduced the term in **1972 at the AILA congress** to describe a more precise field focused on **language learning, teaching, and educational policy**, because of his **discomfort with the ambiguity of applied linguistics**.

He described educational linguistics as a **subgroup within applied linguistics** that forms a **coherent field** mediating between **theory and practice**, integrating areas such as **sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis**. According to **Hornberger**, the field begins with **real educational practice, especially classroom teaching and learning**, and studies how **language influences learning and teaching**.

Main goal is to understand and improve education through the study of language, and this goal shapes how the field has developed. Hornberger explains three major dimensions reflected on the nature and scope of educational linguistics:

- ❖ **First**, the integration of linguistics and education.
- ❖ **Second**, it offers detailed and systematic analysis of many language-related learning issues, such as literacy, multilingualism, and classroom interaction.
- ❖ **Third**, it is problem-oriented, focusing on real educational problems and examining how theory, research, policy, and classroom practice influence one another.

3) The Nature of Educational Linguistics

In his early formulations, Spolsky envisioned a close relationship between educational linguistics and (applied) linguistics, much like the relationship between educational psychology and (applied) psychology. At the same time, Spolsky makes it clear in his description of educational linguistics that it must necessarily involve much more than linguistics. He writes, “Language teaching takes place in a school and is closely tied to sociological, economic, Political, and psychological factors.

He notes that linguistics has a central role to play and it is in this area that most education linguists will have their primary training. There is a striking similarity between Spolsky’s

problem-oriented approach and Halliday's notion. Halliday characterizes transdisciplinarity as creating new forms of intellectual activity that are thematic rather than disciplinary.

For Spolsky educational linguistics starts with a specific problem and then looks to linguistics and other relevant disciplines for solutions. The transdisciplinary nature of educational linguistics is important both: to the individual researcher and to the field of educational linguistics as a whole

Linguistics is not limited to theoretical linguistics, but it is defined broadly as multiple systematic ways of studying language. This broader conception aligns with the intellectual tradition of linguistics and the visions of scholars such as Sapir and Dell Hymes. The individual educational linguist, trained in any number of combinations of these or other relevant areas of study might have her or his home in a variety of different departments, including (anthropology, applied linguistics, area studies, education, English, foreign languages, psychology, and sociology.

To investigate complex themes that emerging from educational practice, educational linguists must be trained in a variety of theoretical and analytical tools: develop critical thinking skills and these skills prepare researchers. Moreover, Educational linguists are able to approach themes that have not previously been addressed within bounded disciplines, a distinction is made between inter-/multidisciplinary thinking and transdisciplinary thinking

Educational linguistics shares key characteristics with critical applied linguistics, particularly an emphasis on continually questioning established ways of doing applied linguistics and pushing thinking in new and provocative directions. Furthermore, the body of knowledge produced by educational linguistics, when seen as a whole, creates novel interconnections between theory and practice.

4) The scope of Educational Linguistics

Spolsky indicates, "The primary task of the educational linguist is to offer information relevant to the formation of language education policy and to its implementation". The focus on educational practice is both indirect and direct:

- knowledge produced in educational linguistics may guide the development of sound educational language policy designed to influence practice
- Knowledge may also guide sound teaching practice as it is implemented in relation to educational language policy.

- Spolsky defines the scope of educational linguistics as:

- the intersection of linguistics and related language sciences with formal and informal education
- Educational linguistics has already been characterized as transdisciplinary, with a particular focus on: language education and the special place of policy.

The areas to which educational linguistics might be relevant and extensive Spolsky identifies broad areas such as; First and second language pedagogy and Teaching of reading, writing, spelling listening.

Building on Carroll's (1962) perspective, Spolsky argues that the ultimate goal of educational linguistics is to arrive at an understanding of the sum total of individual, institutional, and societal processes that factors into the learning of how to use language for communication. The wide range of themes can be organized into broader core areas, including: Linguistically and culturally responsive education, Literacy development, Language acquisition and Language assessment.

Q/: Why EL policy important?

- Educational language policy is part of broader national language planning, focusing specifically on the educational sector.
- It is a high-stakes area of language planning because it serves political, social, and economic agendas.
- Education is a domain in which children spend many years under systematic obligatory government control; thus, it is a domain unique in its ability to influence lifelong language behavior.

- Values and beliefs that are pervasive in public discourse find their way into educational language policies.

Educational linguists must work collaboratively with policymakers and educators to ensure that the needs of all learners are met through informed, linguistically responsible pedagogy.

To achieve this, **every educational linguist must have:**

- A clear vision for their work
- An understanding of how it fits in relation to the work of other scholars 3-An awareness of how it serves to advance education

Conclusion

Educational linguistics is a part of applied linguistics that focuses on language in education. Shaped largely by Bernard Spolsky, it uses ideas from linguistics, psychology, and education to study language learning, teaching, and policy in schools, including areas such as second language learning, bilingual education, literacy, and designing a curriculum. Educational linguistics has become a distinct field with its own theories and methods, while still closely connected to applied linguistics. Today, educational linguistics plays an important role by offering practical insights into language teaching and learning in different educational settings.