

CRITICAL APPLIED LINGUISTICS: CONCERNS AND DOMAINS

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1. Introduction

Critical applied linguistics is not yet a term that has wide currency. What is Critical Applied Linguistics? Is it an approach, a theory or a discipline? Simply put, it is a critical approach to applied linguistics. Such an understanding, however, leads to several further questions: What is applied linguistics? What is meant by “critical”? Is critical applied linguistics merely the addition of a critical approach to applied linguistics? Or is it something more? These questions are still left open for different interpretations. With a view to providing tentative answers to these questions, this article is designed as a sketch of what is meant by critical applied linguistics. A number of important concerns and questions that can bring us closer to an understanding of what is taken to be critical applied linguistics will be raised. These concerns have to do with:

- The scope and coverage of applied linguistics
- The notion of praxis as a way of going beyond a dichotomous relation between theory and practice
- Different ways of understanding the notion “critical”
- The importance of relating micro - relations of applied linguistics to macro - relations of society
- The need for a critical form of social inquiry

- The role of critical theory
- Critical applied linguistics as a constant questioning of assumptions
- The importance of an element of self reflexivity in critical work
- The role of ethically argued preferred futures
- An understanding of critical applied linguistics as far more than the sum of its parts.

2. Critical applied linguistics concerns

Applied Linguistics

To start with, to the extent that critical applied linguistics is seen as a critical approach to applied linguistics, it needs to operate with a broad view of applied linguistics. Applied linguistics, however, has been a hard domain to define. The *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics* gives us two definitions: “the study of second and foreign language learning and teaching” and “the study of language and linguistics in relation to practical problems, such as lexicography, translation, speech pathology, etc.” From this point of view, then, we have two different domains, the first to do with second or foreign language teaching (but, not, significantly, first language education), the second to do with language - related problems in various

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areas in which language plays a major role. This first version of applied linguistics is by and large a result historically of its emergence from applying linguistic theory to contexts of second language pedagogy in the United States in the 1940s. It is also worth observing that this focus on language teaching has also been massively oriented toward teaching English as a second language. The second version is a more recent broadening of the field, although it is certainly not accepted by applied linguists such as Widdowson (1999), who continue to argue that applied linguistics mediate between linguistic theory and language teaching.

In addition, there is a further question as to whether we are dealing with the application of linguistics to applied domains - what Widdowson (1980) termed linguistics applied - or whether applied linguistics has a more autonomous status. Markee (1990) termed these the strong and the weak versions of applied linguistics, respectively. As a Beaugrande (1997) and Markee (1990) argue, it is the so-called strong version - linguistics applied - that has predominated, from the classic British tradition encapsulated in Corder's (1973) and Widdowson's (1980) work through to the parallel North American version encapsulated in the second language acquisition studies of writers such as Krashen (1981). Reversing Markee's (1990) labels, I would argue that this might be more usefully seen as the weak version because it renders applied linguistics

little more than an application of a parent domain of knowledge (linguistics) to different contexts (mainly language teaching). The applied linguistics that critical applied linguistics deals with, by contrast, is a strong version marked by breadth of coverage, interdisciplinarity, and a degree of autonomy. From this point of view, applied linguistics is an area of work that deals with language use in professional setting, translation, speech pathology, literacy, and language education; and it is not merely the application of linguistic knowledge to such settings but is a semi-autonomous and interdisciplinary domain of work that draws on but is not dependent on areas such as sociology, education, anthropology, cultural studies, and psychology. Critical applied linguistics adds many new domains to this.

Praxis

A second concern of applied linguistics in general, and one that critical applied linguistics also needs to address, is the distinction between theory and practice. There is often a problematic tendency to engage in applied linguistic research and theorizing and then to suggest pedagogical or other applications that are not grounded in particular contexts of practice. This is a common orientation in the linguistics-applied-to-language-teaching approach to applied linguistics. There is also, on the other hand, a tendency to dismiss applied linguistic theory as not about the real world. I want to resist both versions of applied linguistics in all its contexts as a

constant reciprocal relation between theory and practice, or preferably, as “that continuous reflexive integration of thought, desire and action sometimes referred to as ‘praxis’ (Simon, 1992 : 49). Discourse analysis is a practice that implies a theory, as a research into second language acquisition, translation and teaching. Thus, we prefer to avoid the theory-into-practice direction and instead see these as more complexly intermingled. This is why it is possible to suggest that critical applied linguistics is a way of thinking and doing, a “continuous reflexive integration of thought, desire and action.”

Being Critical

If the scope and coverage of applied linguistics needs careful consideration, so too does the notion what it means to be critical or to do critical work. Apart from some general uses of the term such as “Don’t be so critical”- one of the most common uses is in the sense of critical thinking or literacy criticism. Critical thinking is used to describe a way of bringing more rigorous analysis to problem solving or textual understanding, a way of developing more critical distance as it is sometimes called. This form of “skilled critical questioning” (Brookfield, 1987 : 92), which has recently gained some currency in applied linguistics, can be broken down into a set of thinking skills, a set of rules for thinking that can be taught to students. Similarly, while the sense of critical reading in literacy criticism usually adds an aesthetic dimension of

textual appreciation, many versions of literacy criticism have attempted to create the same sort of “critical distance” by developing “objective” methods of textual analysis. Much work that is done in “critical thinking - a site in which one might expect students to learn ways of evaluating the “uses” of text and the implications of taking up one reading position over another - simply assumes an objectivist view of knowledge and instructs students to evaluate texts’ “credibility”, “purpose,” and “bias”, as if these were transcendent qualities.

It is this sense of “critical” that has been given some space by many applied linguists (e.g. Widdowson, 1999) who argue that critical applied linguistics should operate with this form of critical distance and objectivist evaluation rather than a more politicized version of critical applied linguistics.

Although there is of course much to be said for such an ability to analyze and criticize, there are two other major themes in critical work that sit in opposition to this approach. The first may accept the possibility that critical distance and objectivity are important and achievable but argues that the most significant aspect of critical work is an engagement with political critiques of social relations. Such a position insists that critical inquiry can remain objective and is no less so because of its engagement with social critique. The second argument is one that also insists on the notion of “critical” as always engaging with questions of power and inequality, but it differs from the first in

terms of its rejection of any possibility of critical distance or objectivity. For the moment let us call them the modernist-

emancipatory position and the postmodern-problematizing position (see Table1).

Table 1
Three Approaches to Critical Work

	Critical thinking	Emancipatory modernism	Problematizing practice
Politics	Liberalism	Neo-Marxism	Feminism, Postcolonialism, Queer theory, etc.
Theoretical base	Humanism	Critical theory	Poststructuralism
Goals	Questioning skills	Ideology critique	Discursive mapping

Micro and Macro Relations

Whichever of these two positions we take, however, it is clear that rather than basing critical applied linguistics on a notion of teachable critical thinking skills, or critical distance from social and political relations, critical applied linguistics has two ways of relating aspects of applied linguistics to broader social, cultural, and political domains. One of the shortcomings of work in applied linguistics generally has been a tendency to operate with what is elsewhere called decontextualised contexts. It is common to view applied linguistics as concerned with language in context, but the conceptualization of context is frequently one that is limited to an overlocalized and undertheorized view of social relations. One of the key challenges for critical applied linguistics, therefore, is to find ways of mapping micro and macro relations, ways of understanding a relation between concepts of society,

ideology, global capitalism, colonialism, education, gender, racism, sexuality, class and classroom utterances, translations, conversions, genres, second language acquisition, media texts. Whether it is critical applied linguistics as a critique of mainstream applied linguistics, or as a form of critical text analysis, or as an approach to understanding the politics of translation, or as an attempt to understand implications of the global spread of English, a central issue always concerns how the classroom, text, or conversation is related to broader social cultural and political relations.

Critical Social Inquiry

It is not enough, however, merely to draw connections between micro-relations of language in context and macro-relations of social inquiry. Rather, such connections need to be drawn within a critical approach to social relations. That is to say, critical applied

linguistics is concerned not merely with relating language contexts to social contexts but rather does so from a point of view that views social relations as problematic. Although a great deal of work in sociolinguistics, for example, has tended to map language onto a rather static view of society; critical sociolinguistics is concerned with a critique of ways in which language perpetuates inequitable social relations. From the point of view of studies of language and gender, the issue is not merely to describe how language is used differently along gendered lines but to use such an analysis as part of social critique and transformation. A central element of critical applied linguistics, therefore, is a way of exploring language in social contexts that goes beyond mere correlations between language and society and instead raises more critical questions to do with access, power, disparity, desire, difference, and resistance. It also insists on a historical understanding of how social relations came to be the way they are.

Critical Theory

One way of taking up such questions has been through the work known as Critical Theory, a tradition of work linked to Frankfurt School and such thinkers as Adorno, Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, and currently J rgen Habermas. A great deal of critical social theory, at least in the Western tradition, has drawn in various ways on this reworking of Marxist theory to include more complex understandings of, for

example, ways in which the Marxist concept of ideology relates to psychoanalytic understandings of subconscious, how aspects of popular culture are related to forms of political control, and how particular forms of positivism and rationalism have come to dominate other possible ways of thinking. At the very least, this body of work reminds us that critical applied linguistics needs at some level to engage with the long legacy of Marxism, Neo-Marxism, and its many counterarguments. Critical work in this sense has to engage with questions of inequality, injustice, rights, and wrongs.

Looking more broadly at the implications of this line of thinking, we might say that “critical” here means taking social inequality and social transformation as central to one’s work. Marc Poster (1989:3) suggests that “critical theory springs from an assumption that we live amid a world of pain, that much can be done to alleviate that pain, and that theory has a crucial role to play in that process”.

Taking up Poster’s (1989) terms, critical applied linguistics is an approach to language-related questions that spring from an assumption that we live amid a world of pain and that applied linguistics may have an important role in either the production or the alleviation of some of that pain. But it is also a view that insists not merely on the alleviation of pain but also the possibility of change.

Problematizing Givens

While the sense of critical thinking as discussed earlier - a set of thinking

skills - attempts almost by definition to remain isolated from political questions, from issues of power, disparity, difference, or desire, the sense of “critical” that is to be made central to critical applied linguistics is one that takes these as the *sine qua non* of our work. Critical applied linguistics is not about developing a set of skills that will make the doing of applied linguistics more politically accountable. Nevertheless, there are quite divergent strands within critical thought. As Dean (1994) suggests, the version of critical theory that tends to critique “modernist narratives in terms of the one-sided, pathological, advance of technocratic or instrumental reason they celebrate” only to offer “an alternative, higher version of rationality” in their place (Dean, 1994: 3). A great deal of the work currently being done in critical domains related to critical applied linguistics often falls into this category of emancipatory modernism, developing a critique of social and political formations but offering only a version of an alternative truth in its place. This version of critical modernism, with its emphasis on emancipation and rationality, has a number of limitations.

In place of Critical Theory, Dean (1994:4) goes on to propose what he calls a problematizing practice. This, he suggests, is a critical practice because “it is unwilling to accept the taken-for-granted components of our reality and the “official” accounts of how they came to be the way they are”. Thus, a crucial component of critical work is always

turning a skeptical eye toward assumptions, ideas that have become “naturalized”, notions that are no longer questioned. Dean (1994:4) describes such practice as “the restive problematization of the given”. Drawing on work in areas such as feminism, antiracism, postcolonialism, postmodernism, or queer theory, this approach to the critical seeks not so much the stable ground of an alternative truth but rather the constant questioning of all categories. From this point of view, critical applied linguistics is not only about relating micro - relations of applied linguistics to macro - relations of social and political power; neither is it only concerned with relating such questions to a prior critical analysis of inequality. Rather, it is also concerned with questioning what is meant by and what is maintained by many of the everyday categories of applied linguistics: language learning, communication, difference, context, text, culture, meaning, translation, writing, literacy, assessment, and so on.

Self-reflexivity

Such a problematizing stance leads to another significant element that needs to be made part of any critical applied linguistics. If critical applied linguistics needs to retain a constant skepticism, a constant questioning of the givens of applied linguistics, this problematizing stance must also be turned on itself. The notion of “critical” also needs to imply an awareness “of the limits of knowing”. One of the problems with emancipatory-modernism is its

assurity about its own rightness, its belief that an adequate critique of social and political inequality can lead to an alternative reality. A postmodern problematizing stance, however, needs to maintain a greater sense of humility and difference and to raise questions about the limits of its own knowing. This self-reflexive position also suggests that critical applied linguistics is not concerned with producing itself as a new orthodoxy, with prescribing new models and procedures for doing applied linguistics. Rather, it is concerned with raising a host of new and difficult questions about knowledge, politics, and ethics.

Preferred Futures

Critical applied linguistics also needs to operate with some sort of vision of what is preferable. Critical work has often been criticized for doing little more than criticize things, for offering nothing but a bleak and pessimistic vision of social relations. Various forms of critical work, particularly, in areas such as education, have sought to avoid this trap by articulating “utopian” visions of alternative realities, by stressing the “transformative” mission of critical work or the potential for change through awareness and emancipation. While such goals at least present a direction for reconstruction, they also echo with a rather troubling modernist grandiosity. Perhaps the notion of preferred futures offers us a slightly more restrained and plural view of where we might want to head.

Such preferred futures, however, need to be grounded in ethical

arguments for why alternative possibilities may be better. For this reason, ethics has to become a key building block for critical applied linguistics, although, as with my later discussion of politics, this is not a normative or moralistic code of practice but a recognition that these are ethical concerns with which we need to deal. And this notion suggests that it is not only a language of critique that is being developed here but rather an ethics of compassion and a model of hope and possibility.

Critical Applied Linguistics as Heterosis

Using Street's (1984) distinction between autonomous and ideological approaches to literacy, Rampton (1995b) argues that applied linguistics in Britain has started to shift from its “autonomous” view of research with connections to pedagogy, linguistics, and psychology to a more “ideological” model with connections to media studies and a more grounded understanding of social processes. Critical applied linguistics opens the door for such change even wider by drawing on yet another range of “outside” work (critical theory, feminism, postcolonialism, poststructuralism, antiracist pedagogy)” that both challenges and greatly enriches the possibilities for doing applied linguistics. This means not only that critical applied linguistics implies a hybrid model of research and praxis but also that it generates something that is far more dynamic. The notion of heterosis hereby understood as the

creative expansion of possibilities resulting from hybridity. Put more simply, my point here is that critical applied linguistics is far more than the addition of a critical dimension to applied linguistics; rather, it opens up a whole new array of questions and concerns, issues such as identity, sexuality, or the reproduction of Otherness that have hitherto not been considered as concerns related to applied linguistics.

The notion of heterosis helps deal with a final concern, the question of normativity. It might be objected that what is being sketched out here is a problematically normative approach: by defining what is meant by *critical* and *critical applied linguistics*, an approach that already has a predefined political stance and mode of analysis is being set up. There is a certain tension here: an overdefined version of critical applied linguistics that demands adherence to a particular form of politics is a project

that is already limited; but we also cannot envision a version of critical applied linguistics that can accept any political viewpoint. The way forward here is this: On the one hand, we are arguing that critical applied linguistics must necessarily take up certain positions and stances; its view of language cannot be an autonomous one that backs away from connecting language to broader political concerns, and furthermore, its focus on such politics must be accountable to broader political and ethical visions that put inequality, oppression, and compassion to the fore. On the other hand, we do not want to suggest a narrow and normative vision of how those politics work. The notion of heterosis, however, opens up the possibility that critical applied linguistics is indeed not about the mapping of a fixed politics onto a static body of knowledge but rather is about creating something new. These critical applied linguistics concerns are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2
Critical Applied Linguistics Concerns

Critical applied linguistics (CALx) concerns	Centered on the following:	In opposition to mainstream applied linguistics (ALx):
↓	↓	↓
A strong view of Applied linguistics (ALx)	Breadth of coverage, interdisciplinarity, and autonomy	The weak version of ALx linguistic theory applied to language teaching
A view of praxis	Thought, desire, and action integrated as praxis	A hierarchy of theory and its application to different contexts

Being critical	Critical work engaged with social change	Critical thinking as an apolitical set of skills
Micro and macro relations	Relating aspects of applied linguistics to broader social, cultural, and political domains	Viewing classroom, texts, and so on as isolated and autonomous
Critical social inquiry	Questions of access, power, disparity, desire, difference, and resistance	Mapping language onto a static model of society
Critical theory	Questions of inequality, injustice, rights, wrongs, and compassion	A view of social relations as largely equitable
Problematizing givens	The restive problematization of the canon of received given	Acceptance of the norms and ideas
Self-reflexivity	Constant questions of itself	Lack of awareness of its own assumption
Preferred futures	Grounded ethical arguments for alternatives	View that applied linguistics should not aim for change
Heterosis	The sum is greater than the parts and creates new schemas of p	The notion that: $\text{Politics} + \text{Alx} = \text{CALx}$

3. Domains of critical applied linguistics

Critical applied linguistics, then, is more than just a critical dimension added onto applied linguistics: It involves a constant skepticism, a constant questioning of the normative assumptions of applied linguistics. It demands a restive problematization of the givens of applied linguistics and presents a way of doing applied linguistics that seeks to connect it to questions of gender, class, sexuality, race, ethnicity, culture, identity, politics,

ideology, and discourse. And crucially, it becomes a dynamic opening up of new questions that emerge from this conjunction. In this second part a rough overview is given of domains seen as comprising critical applied linguistics. This list is neither exhaustive nor definitive of the areas mentioned in this article. But taken in conjunction with the issues raised earlier, it presents us with two principal ways of conceiving of critical applied linguistics - various underlying principal ways and various domains of coverage. The areas

summarized briefly in this article are critical discourse analysis and critical literacy, critical approaches to translation, language teaching, language testing, language planning and language rights, literacy, and workplace settings.

Critical Discourse Analysis and Critical Literacy

It might be tempting to consider critical applied linguistics as an amalgam of other critical domains. From this view point, critical applied linguistics would either be made up of or constitute the intersection of, areas such as critical linguistics, critical discourse analysis (CDA), critical language awareness, critical pedagogy, critical sociolinguistics, and critical literacy. Such a formulation is unsatisfactory for several reasons. First, the coverage of such domains is rather different from that of critical applied linguistics; critical pedagogy, for example, is used broadly across many areas of education. Second, there are many other domains – feminism, queer theory, postcolonialism, to name but a few - that do not operate under an explicit critical label but that clearly have a great deal of importance for the area. Third, it seems more constructive to view critical applied linguistics not merely as an amalgam of different parts or a metacategory or critical work but rather in more dynamic and productive terms. And finally, crucially, part of developing critical applied linguistics is developing a critical stance toward other areas of work, including other critical domains. Critical applied linguistics may borrow

and use work from these other areas, but it should certainly only do so critically.

Nevertheless, there are clearly major affinities and overlaps between critical applied linguistics and other named critical areas such as critical literacy and critical discourse analysis. Critical literacy has less often been considered in applied linguistics, largely because of its greater orientation towards first language literacy, which has often not fallen within the perceived scope of applied linguistics. It is possible, however, to see critical literacy in terms of the pedagogical application of critical discourse analysis and therefore a quite central concern for critical applied linguistics. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and critical literacy are sometimes also combined under the rubric of critical language awareness (CLA) since the aim of this work is to empower learners by providing them a critical analytical framework to help them reflect on their own language experiences and practices and on the language practices of others in the institutions of which they are a part and in the wider society within which they live.

Critical approaches to literacy are characterized by a commitment to reshape literacy education in the interests of marginalized groups of learners, who on the basis of gender, cultural and socio-economic background have been excluded from access to the discourses and texts of dominant economies and cultures.

Although critical literacy does not stand for a unitary approach, it marks

out a coalition of educational interests committed to engaging with possibilities that the technologies of writing and other modes of inscription offer for social change, cultural diversity, economic equity, and political enfranchisement.

Thus, as Luke (1997a) argues, although critical approaches to literacy share an orientation toward understanding literacy (or literacies) as social practices related to broader social and political concerns, there are a number of different orientations to critical literacy, including Freirean-based critical pedagogy, feminist and poststructuralist approaches, and text analytic approaches. Critical Discourse Analysis would generally fall into this last category, aimed as it is at providing tools for the critical analysis of texts in context.

Unlike discourse analysis or text linguistics with their descriptive goals, CDA has the larger political aim of putting the forms of texts, the processes of the production of texts, and the process of reading, together with the structures of power that have given rise to them, into analysis. CDA aims to show how “linguistic-discursive practices” are linked to “the wider socio-political structures of power and domination”. Van Dijk (1993 :249) explains CDA as a focus on “the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance”. And Fairclough (1995:132) explains that critical discourse analysis

aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and

determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power.

Clearly, CDA will be an important tool for critical applied linguistics.

Critical Approaches to Translation

Other domains of textual analysis to critical applied linguistics include critical approaches to translation. Such an approach would not be concerned so much with issues such as mistranslation in itself but rather the politics of translation, the way in which translating and interpreting are related to concerns such as class, gender, difference, ideology and social context.

Looking more broadly at translation as a political activity, Venuti (1997:6) argues that the tendencies of translation to domesticate foreign cultures, the insistence on the possibility of value-free translation, the challenges to the notion of authorship posed by translation, the dominance of translation from English into other languages rather than in the other direction, and the need to unsettle local cultural hegemonies through the challenges of translation all point to the need for an approach to translation based on an ethics of difference. Such as stance, on the one hand, “urges that translations be written, read, and evaluated with greater respect for linguistic and cultural differences”. On the other hand,

it aims at “minoritizing the standard dialect and dominant cultural forms in American English” in part as “an opposition to the global hegemony of English”. Such a stance clearly matches closely the forms of critical applied linguistics that has been outlined so far: it is based on an ethics of difference, and tries in its practice to move toward change.

Work on translation and colonial and postcolonial studies is also of interests for critical applied linguistics. Translation as a practice shapes, and takes shapes within, the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism. In forming a certain kind of subject, in presenting particular versions of colonized, translation brings into being overarching concepts of reality, knowledge, and representation. These concepts, and what they allow us to assume, completely occlude the violence which accompanies the construction of the colonial subject.

Postcolonial translation studies, then, are able to shed light on the processes by which translation, and the massive body of Orientalist, Aboriginalist, and other studies and translations of the Other, were so clearly complicit with the large colonial project (Spivak, 1993). Once again, such work clearly has an important role to play in the development of critical applied linguistics.

Language Teaching

Language teaching has been a domain that has often been considered

the principal concern of applied linguistics.

Questions of gender, sexuality and sexual identity, different configurations of power and inequality have been taken as focus in many researches. Bilingualism has also been an element that needs consideration in language education. Critical bilingualism can be seen as the ability to not just speak two languages, but to be conscious of the socio-cultural, political and ideological contexts in which the languages (and therefore the speakers) are positioned and function, and the multiple meanings that are fostered in each.

Currently, there is an increasing amount of much needed critical analysis of the interests and ideologies underlying the construction and interpretation of textbooks (see Dendrinos, 1992). There is critical analysis of curriculum design and needs analysis, including a proposal for doing “critical needs analysis” that assumes that institutions are hierarchical and that those at the bottom are often entitled to more power than they have. It seeks areas where greater equality might be achieved.

The use of critical ethnography to explore how students and teachers in the *periphery* resist an appropriate English and English teaching methods sheds important light on classroom processes in reaction to dominant linguistic and pedagogical forms: It is important to understand the extent to which classroom resistance may play a

significant role in large transformations in the social sphere. Diverse as these CAL studies are, they all show an interweaving of the themes discussed herein with a range of concerns to do with language teaching.

Language Testing

As a fairly closely defined and practically autonomous domain of applied linguistics and one that has generally adhered to positivist approaches to research and knowledge, language testing has long been fairly resistant to critical challenges. Critical language testing (CLT) starts with the assumption that the act of language testing is not neutral. Rather, it is a product and agent of cultural, social, political, educational and ideological agendas that shape the lives of individual participants, teachers and learners.

Test takers are seen as “political subject in a political context”. Tests are deeply embedded in cultural, educational and political arenas where different ideological social forms are in struggle. On account of this, it is impossible to consider that a test is just a test; CLT asks whose agendas are implemented through tests; it demands that language testers ask what vision of society tests presuppose; it asks whose knowledge the test is based on and whether this knowledge is negotiable; it considers the meaning of test scores and the extent to which this is open to interpretation; and it challenges

psychometric traditions of language testing (and supports “interpretive” approaches). Such a view of language testing signifies an important paradigm shift and puts many new criteria for understanding validity into play: consequential, systemic, interpretive, and ethical, all of which have more to do with the effects of tests than with criteria of internal validity.

Language testing is always political. We need to become increasingly aware of the effects (consequential validity) of tests, and that the way forward is to develop more “democratic” tests in which test takers and other local bodies are given greater involvement. Thus, there is a demand to see a domain of applied linguistics, from classrooms to texts and tests, as inherently bound up with large social, cultural and political contexts. This ties in the concerns about different possible interpretations of texts in tests and the question of whose reading is acknowledged: If test makers are drawn from a particular class, a particular race, and a particular gender, then test takers who share these characteristics will be at an advantage relative to other test takers. There is a critique of positivism and psychometric testing with their emphasis on blend measurement rather than situated forms of knowledge. There is a demand to establish what a preferred vision of society is and a call to make one’s applied linguistics practice accountable to such a vision. And there

are suggestions for different practices that might start to change how testing is done. All these are clearly aspects of CLT that bring it comfortably within the ambit of critical applied linguistics.

Language Planning and Language Rights

One domain of applied linguistics that might be assumed to fall easily into the scope of critical applied linguistics is work such as language policy and planning since it would appear from the outset to operate with a political view of language. Yet, as suggested in the previous section, it is not enough merely to draw connections between language and the social world; a critical approach to social relations is also required. There is nothing inherently critical about language policy. Indeed, part of the problem, has been precisely the way in which language policy has been uncritically developed and implemented. While maintaining a “veneer of scientific objectivity,” language planning has tended to avoid directly addressing large social and political matters within which language change, use and development, and indeed language planning itself are embedded.

More generally, sociolinguistics has been severely critiqued by critical social theorists for its use of a static, liberal view of society and thus its inability to deal with questions of social justice.. As Mey (1985: 342) suggests, by avoiding questions of social inequality in class

terms and instead correlating language variation with superficial measures of social stratification, traditional sociolinguistics fails to “establish a connection between people’s place in the societal hierarchy, and the linguistic and other kinds of oppression that they are subjected to at different levels”. Cameron (1995:15-16) has also pointed to the need to develop a view of language and society that goes beyond a view that language reflects society.

Critical applied linguistics would need to incorporate views of language, society, and power that are capable of dealing with questions of access, power, disparity, and difference and that see language as playing a crucial role in the construction of difference.

Two significant domains of sociolinguistics that have developed broad critical analysis are first work on language and gender and second work on language rights. Questions about the dominance of certain languages over others have been raised by Phillipson (1992) through his notion of (English) linguistic imperialism and his argument that English has been spread for economic and political purposes, and poses a major threat to other languages.

The other side of this argument has been taken up through arguments for language rights. We are still living with linguistic wrongs that are a product of the belief in the normality of monolingualism and the dangers of

multilingualism to the security of the nation state. Both are dangerous myths. What is proposed, then, is that the right to identify with, to maintain and to fully develop one's mother tongue(s)" should be acknowledged as "a self-evident, fundamental individual linguistic human right". Critical applied linguistics, then, would include work in the areas of sociolinguistics and language planning and policy that takes up an overt political agenda to establish or to argue for policy along lines that focus centrally on issues of social justice.

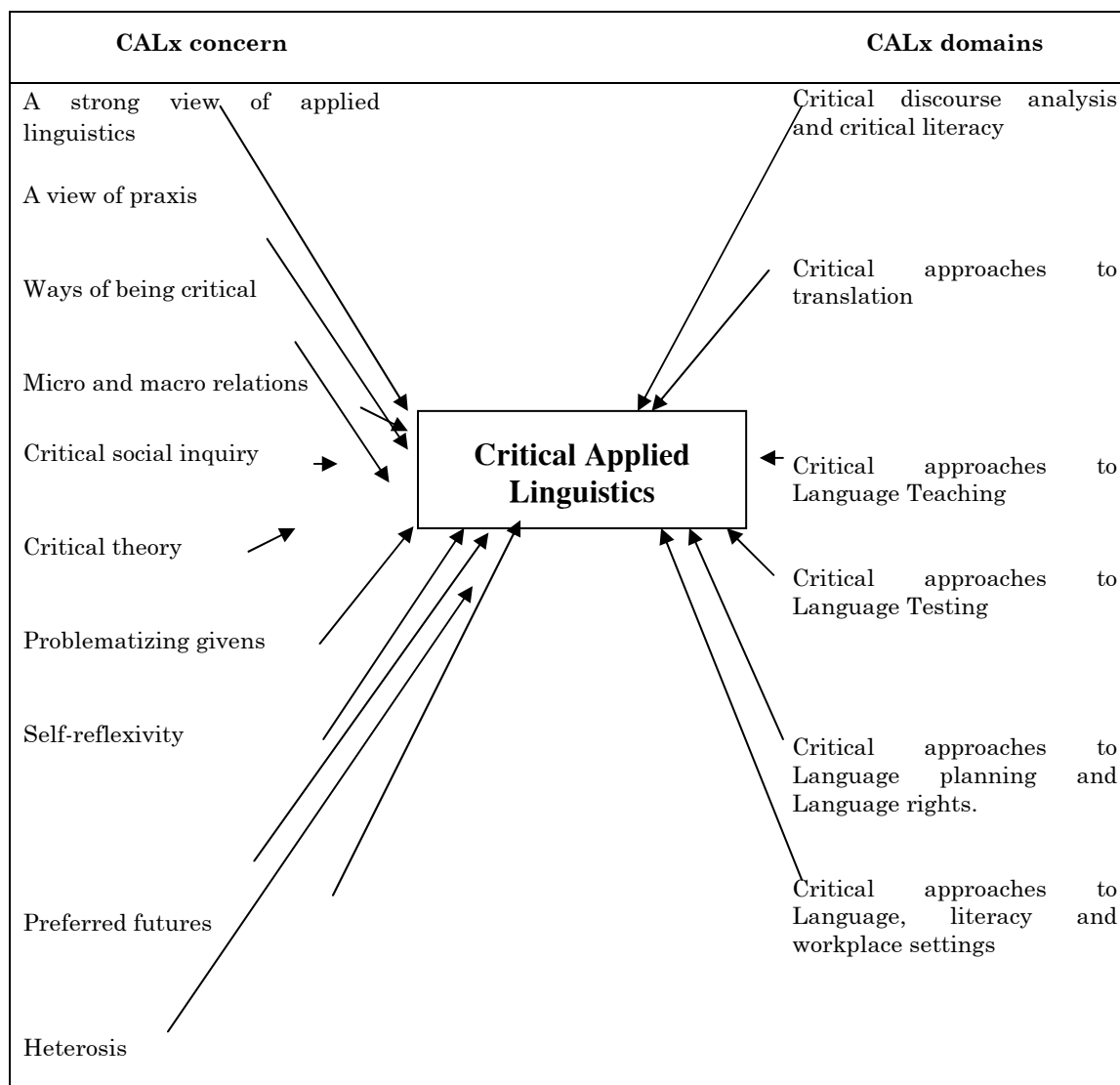
Language, Literacy, and Workplace Settings

Another domain of work in applied linguistics that has been taken up with a critical focus has been the work on uses of language and literacy in various workplace and professional settings. Moving beyond work that attempts only to describe the patterns of communication or genres of interaction between people in medical, legal, or other workplace settings, critical applied linguistics approaches to these contexts of communication focus far more on questions of access, power, disparity, and difference. Such approaches also attempt to move toward active engagement with and change in these contexts.

It has been observed that there are connections between workplace uses of language and relations of power at the institutional and broader social levels.

Recently, the rapid changes in workplace practices and changing needs of new forms of literacy have attracted considerable attention. Gee, Hull, and Lankshear (1996), for example, look at the effects of the new work order under new capitalism on language and literacy practices in the workplace. Poynton (1993b), meanwhile, draws attention to the danger that "workplace restructuring" may "exacerbate the marginalised status of many women" not only because of the challenge of changing workplace skills and technologies but also because of the failure to acknowledge in language the character and value of women's skills. Women's interactive oral skills as well as their literacy skills have often failed to be acknowledged in workplaces.

One thing that emerges here is the way in which critical concerns are intertwined. Not only are the framing issues discussed in the previous section ever present here, but also both the domains described in this section - critical approaches to discourse, translation, bilingualism, language policy, pedagogy - and the underlying social relations of race, class, gender, and other constructions of difference are all at work together. The interrelation between the concerns (discussed earlier) and the domains (discussed here) of critical applied linguistics are outlined in the following figure:



Concerns and domains of critical applied linguistics

4. Conclusion

(i) The two main strands of this article – different concerns and domains of critical applied linguistics - have helped bring about a broad overview of critical applied linguistics. This list, however, is neither complete nor

discrete: It is by no means exhaustive, and the categories established overlap with each other in a number of ways. A number of general concerns already emerge from the aforementioned aspects and domains: How do we understand relations between language and power? How can people resist power in and

through language? How do we understand questions of difference in relation to language, education, or literacy? How does ideology operate in relation to discourse? We, therefore, have to deal with the politics of language, the politics of texts, the politics of pedagogy, and the politics of difference.

Surely, an approach to issues in language education, communication in the workplace, translation, and literacy that focus on questions of power, difference, access, and domination ought to be central to our concerns.

(ii) Two last meanings of *critical* that can also be given some space here are: (a) *critical* as *important* or *crucial*: a crucial moment, a critical time in one's life, a critical illness and (b) *critical* as used in maths and physics to suggest the point that marks the change from one state to an other. In the version of applied linguistics being presented here, the notion of "critical" may lead to the understanding that critical applied linguistics deals with some of the central issues in language use to the extent that

it may also signal a point at which applied linguistics may finally move into a new state of being.

These senses of *critical* also need to be included in an understanding of critical applied linguistics.

(iii) Discussing the broader social and political issues to do with literacy and language education, language teachers are offered a choice: either to "cooperate in their own marginalization by seeing themselves as "language teachers" with no connection to such social and political issues" or to accept that they are involved in a crucial domain of political work. Given the significance of the even broader domain we are interested in here-language, literacy, communication, translation, bilingualism, and pedagogy - and the particular concerns to do with the global role of languages, multilingualism, power, and possibilities for the creation of difference-it would not seem too far-fetched to suggest that critical applied linguistics may at least give us ways of dealing with some of the most crucial educational, cultural, and political issues of our time.

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NGÔN NGỮ HỌC ỨNG DỤNG PHÊ PHÁN: NHỮNG VẤN ĐỀ QUAN TÂM VÀ CÁC LĨNH VỰC NGHIÊN CỨU

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Thuật ngữ “Ngôn ngữ học ứng dụng phê phán” xuất hiện gần đây trong các tài liệu ngôn ngữ học và dạy tiếng. Nội hàm của khái niệm này là gì? Nó quy chiếu tới một đường hướng nghiên cứu, một lý thuyết hay một địa hạt trong ngôn ngữ học? Các câu hỏi này đang để ngỏ cho nhiều cách hiểu khác nhau. Trước nhu cầu đó của thực tiễn, bài báo này được thiết kế để, trong phạm vi và mức độ có thể, giúp đem lại những hiểu biết căn bản về Ngôn ngữ học ứng dụng phê phán. Bài báo bàn về những vấn đề chính để chính sau:

- Yếu tố “phê phán” (critical) trong Ngôn ngữ học ứng dụng;
- Những vấn đề quan tâm của Ngôn ngữ học ứng dụng phê phán;
- Các lĩnh vực nghiên cứu của Ngôn ngữ học ứng dụng phê phán.