

THROUGH THE JARGON JUNGLE

The authors of the *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistic**, Jack Richards, John Platt, and Heidi Weber, state in their introduction, that the term 'applied linguistics' should, in the context of their dictionary, be understood to mean the study of language teaching and learning. As many prospective language teachers enter courses such as the R. S. A. Preparatory Certificate course from fields as wide ranging as political science, biology and fine art this dictionary clearly caters for a very ready market. Even those who approach the study of applied linguistics with a background in modern languages may find themselves confronted by terminology which is not 'a conspiracy against the laity' per se but a jungle which is almost as dense for the professional who is slightly out of touch as it is for the layman. What was once the 'imperfect' has become the 'past progressive', or even the 'past durative'. Words such as 'skill' or 'task' have taken on specific and often unexpected new meanings. New fields of study such as 'pragmatics', new language teaching methods such as 'total physical response', the language of social science methodology, phonology or semantics, not to mention a bewildering range of acronyms (TEFL, TESL, TESOL, TOEFL) may daunt even the highly motivated.

While teacher trainers, lecturers and authors writing for this market, are often at pains to teach the terminology this dictionary will prove indispensable for many. Each headword is accompanied by a phonetic transcription, an invaluable aid to native speakers of English and to speakers of other languages as we frequently encounter unknown terms through our reading and may feel unsure of the standard pronunciation. The authors have taken the trouble to make their definitions both accurate and comprehensible to the non-expert. Where necessary they have provided illustrative examples such as the classic 'The lamb is too hot to eat' to illustrate the process of disambiguation in linguistic analysis, or examples given under the headword 'phrasal verb' which present the distinctive features in terms of grammatical pattern and stress of phrasal, prepositional and phrasal-prepositional verbs. The dictionary is thoroughly and consistently cross-referenced so that the reader on looking up 'labio-dental', for example, will be directed to the entries under both 'place' and 'manner of articulation'. Many of the definitions are followed by suggested further reading and there is a comprehensive bibliography at the back of the dictionary. This would provide an excellent starting point for anyone in charge of setting up a library for students undertaking a distance training programme such as the R. S. A. TEFL Diploma.

Those who take on the task of compiling dictionaries of specialised terms open themselves up to criticism on the grounds of omission and inclusion of unnecessary items. The authors acknowledge that no dictionary can be complete and invite feedback from readers. Everyone will find that his or her 'pet term' has not been defined, but while I noted no glaring oversights I would mention 'folklinguistics', 'fronting', and 'inversion'. I looked for 'catenative' in F. R. Palmer's sense of the

* Published by Longman Group Limited, 1985.

term, but did not find it. The authors do point out, however, that they have excluded items 'only used by an individual scholar'. The inclusion of 'TOEFL' in the light of the omission of Cambridge FCE and Proficiency may suggest a North American bias to some British readers. The dictionary gives us definitions of 'Prague School' and 'Firthian Linguistics' and it struck me that as it is aimed at the non-expert, a few more 'household names' in the field might be very welcome. My criticisms in terms of unnecessary inclusion are even fewer and even more subjective. I would question only 'adaptation' and 'culture'. For the most part the authors have sought to define within the parameters of a given field, ('channel' in the context of sociolinguistics for instance) or to use items with a more general meaning as vehicles for the introduction and explanation of more specialised terminology. Under the headword 'reading', for example, we meet 'literal, inferential, critical and appreciative comprehension' and are referred to the entries under 'scanning' 'reading speed' and 'extensive reading'.

The authors, interestingly, all work at universities in the Pacific: Jack Richards at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, John Platt and Heidi Weber at Monash University in Australia. They have compiled the dictionary with the advice of Professor C. N. Candlin, and Professor John Oller and have had the benefit of suggestions and advice from professionals from all over the world. I did feel that considering this rich linguistic background they might have offered a greater selection of languages in their examples when English was not appropriate. No doubt this tendency could be justified by the argument that their readers are more likely to be familiar with French or German than Tamil or Khmer.

As I read this dictionary I thought back to a teacher trainer I knew, who in her desperation to teach the terminology of her subject, would periodically fire questions at us such as 'What's a phoneme?' Most of us came back with the conditioned response 'The smallest unit of meaningful sound'. Some remained bewildered. If we had been equipped with the 'Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics' we would have known not only our definition, but that English is considered to have 44 of them. We could have compared 'allophone', 'graphone', 'minimal pair', 'phonemics' and 'phonology'. We might have gone on to read either of the books recommended for further reading without our teacher trainer having to alert us to their existence. In short, her role as guide through the «jargon jungle» would have been a good deal easier and we might have become more autonomous and less overwhelmed by the task of mastering a 'foreign language' in order to teach our own.

Sally Burgess
University of La Laguna