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Davies, A. 2005. *A Glossary of Applied Linguistics*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. ISBN 978-08-0585728-3. 142 páginas.

A Glossary of Applied Linguistics (henceforth AGAL) is an easy-to-use terminology guide which, according to the descriptive information on the back cover, serves as an excellent supplement for those taking courses in applied linguistics, language studies or language education. The volume –written by Alan Davies, who is Emeritus Professor of Applied Linguistics at the University of Edinburgh– consists of an Introduction (pp. 1-2), a glossary containing some 490 alphabetically-ordered entries (pp. 3-140), and a brief reading list (pp. 141-143). AGAL is aimed at accomplishing the not always easy task of clarifying the meanings of terms and concepts used in applied linguistics (AL) in a brief-definition format. Particularly significant among the entries are numerous cross-references to related terms, a considerable number of acronyms frequently used in the current literature in English (e.g. BSL, EliF, LEP, LOTE), as well as names of organizations, professional associations, and some research centers (e.g. AAAL, British Council, CAL, Council of Europe), which are often excluded in publications of this sort.

One of the first characteristics to catch the interested reader’s eye is that part of the back-cover blurb does not accurately reflect what is expounded within. As stated above, the information on the back cover identifies the academic courses for which AGAL would be an “ideal companion,” implying that the book is geared towards university students, either at the undergraduate or (more likely) graduate level. However, the choice of certain terms seems inconsistent with the academic reader’s needs (e.g. advertising, dictionary, essay, plagiarism, etc.). Another “key feature” listed on the back of the volume claims that it “includes an introduction which provides an overview of the field.” While to many “providing an overview of the field” in the introduction to a glossary may seem insurmountable, to attempt to do so in less than two pages (with only 2 references) seems rather pretentious.

In this very brief “Introduction,” the author refers to the problem that AL faces –in his view—regarding the imprecise nature of what is being applied. He proposes that if, on

the one hand, the interpretation of AL that is chosen is very limited, only linguistics would be applied, thus resulting in an inaccurate perspective; on the other hand, if the interpretation of AL is very broad (such as the frequent ‘research on language-related problems which arise in the real world’) then everything to do with language would be included. The author concludes that neither of these positions is viable and then expresses a preference for the view proposed by Pit Corder (1973), in favor of language teaching from a broad perspective; the author justifies his particular decision by asserting that: “Such narrowing of the target still makes sense today, which is why most of the entries in this glossary have some connection with language teaching” (Davies 2005: 1).

The main drawback to the interpretation put forward by the author is what he refers to as “Corder’s solution,” that is, defining AL in terms of the ‘linguistics applied to second-language teaching’ perspective; this was simply Corder’s *description* of –rather than his solution to– AL’s still limited scope in Britain in the late 1960s. At the outset of his 1973 book, Corder (1973: 7) acknowledges that some readers will “criticize my implied restriction of the term ‘applied linguistics’ to this field of activity (language teaching),” and then he goes on to claim that this actually reflects common practice: “Because of the greater public interest in language teaching and the considerable official support there has been in recent years for research and teaching in the application of linguistics to language teaching, this term (LA) has effectively come to be restricted in this way in common usage” (Corder 1973: 7). Today, however, such an interpretation could only be perceived as a reductionist or imprecise ‘solution’ in attempting to define the broad multidisciplinary *domain* –as it is no longer ‘a field’– that AL has managed to cover as a result of the tremendous expansion it has experienced in various parts of the world in the last 20 years. Considering the particular definition of AL preferred by the author, this reviewer suggests that a title such as *A Glossary of Language Teaching* would probably have been more indicative of its contents.

As for the glossary itself, there are three aspects of it which this reviewer believes considerably limit AGAL’s contribution. First, the reader may sense a selection problem, more specifically, a lack of clear, predetermined criteria used to select which concepts/terms must be defined, which ones may be included, and which ones do not require definition. The result of this in practice is that there are entries that do not seem particularly relevant in a book of this sort (e.g. Bokmal, Braille, colonial discourse, heteronymy, etc.), while many others which are indeed relevant are not listed (e.g. comprehensible input/output, corrective feedback, cross-linguistic influence, display/referential question, language skills, etc.). For the same reasons, even in the field of second/foreign language teaching –at which the book is explicitly aimed– and, more specifically, in the area of L2 teaching methodologies, there is ambivalence regarding those definitions which are included (e.g. audiolingual methodology, communicative language teaching, functional-notional approach, grammar-translation method) and those which are not (e.g. CLIL/content-based instruction, suggestopedia, direct method, eclectic method, TPR, etc.).

Second, there seems to be no uniform criterion concerning the type of information (objective or subjective/personalized?) or even the style (informative/neutral or humorous/ironic?) that the average definition should offer. There are those definitions which, rather than define a certain term, provide a brief historical account of it (e.g. anthropological linguistics, audiolingual, Ebonics, immersion, etc.), and many include quite personalized comments which, although at times may seem anecdotal, are, in a stricter sense, secondary or unnecessary in the context of a limited-scope volume of brief definitions intended for university students. To provide a few examples, part of the definition for ‘action research’ includes the following comments: “whether action research deserves to be regarded as research is a moot point. But tell that to the anthropologists” (Davies 2005: 6). The definition of ‘mother tongue’ in fact includes more commentary than definition *per se*: “The language to which the child is first exposed ‘at the mother’s knee.’ The term and concept exist in languages other than English (for example in French *langue maternelle*). There seems to be no equivalent concept (or label) ‘father tongue’” (Davies 2005: 96).

Finally, a problem having greater relevance for the reader –especially the novice reader– is that many definitions tend to be ambiguous and/or incomplete (e.g. applied linguistics research, bilingual education, critical discourse analysis, lexis, native speaker, etc.). For instance, regarding the term ‘native speaker’, it is claimed that “Through education they [NSs] also gain access to the standard language, and it is their control of that standard language which normally defines them as native speakers of a particular language such as English” (Davies 2005: 101). The term ‘lexis’ has a similarly ambiguous and incomplete definition which includes the idea that it is “the antonym of grammar” (Davies 2005: 85), while ‘bilingual education’ is described as follows:

It is offered in a range of options, from the Canadian immersion where one language (usually French) takes up the majority of the curriculum and English (the L1 of the students in this case) is given a small share of time, through the more balanced programmes [...] to the foreign language instruction situation where the second/foreign language is given a small share of time. [...] However, no system (not even Canadian immersion) appears to provide complete ambilingualism (balanced bilingualism), which may suggest that such a goal is unattainable (Davies 2005: 15, 16).

One can only wonder how many applied linguists might agree with assertions such as these.

The publication of a reference book on AL from time to time is a welcome resource in academic circles as it fills a real void. There is, in fact, a real need for a volume offering a reasonably clear, up-to-date, and comprehensive perspective on AL; such a perspective may in turn result in a greater understanding of its ever-expanding terminology as well as a more consistent use of terms by AL writers. In the opinion of this reviewer, AGAL offers an uneven contribution regarding such a need. Despite the weaknesses described herein –which could be modified in a future edition– AGAL is

nonetheless a reference book that belongs on university library bookshelves. Its main value is likely to be as a source of additional or contrastive reference for readers or researchers who already have a background and some experience in AL, particularly those who are more interested in the field of second language teaching or some closely related area, such as language testing.

REFERENCE

Corder, S.P. 1973. *Introducing Applied Linguistics*. Harmondsworth: Pelican Books.