**Lecture 3: The evolution of Applied Linguistics**

**Bridging Theory with Practice**

Applied linguistics which is a dynamic and interdisciplinary field emerged primarily as a response to the practical needs of language teaching and communication is now a vital bridge between linguistic theory and real world language-related challenges. This lecture provides a historical overview of the evolution of applied linguistics, highlighting key developments and its enduring impact not only on language education, but also on communication, policy and other areas.

**\* The Early Foundations**

Although the term applied linguistics is often attributed to the British linguist J.R.Firth (1948), the concept of applying linguistic theory to practical problems is said to have appeared before its coinage. The roots of applied linguistics can be traced back to the early-to-mid century when language teaching and communication needs were pressing. The aftermath of the Second World War necessitated affective language instruction methods which sparked the demand for the application of linguistic knowledge. This era witnessed the dominance of structural linguistics which emphasized the analysis of language structures. It influenced the development of language teaching methodologies.

Later on ‘(by the 1950s), notable linguists like Charles Fries and Robert Lado played a pivotal role in developing language teaching methodologies, emphasizing the practical application of linguistic theories. Applied linguistics started a=developing and evaluating language teaching methods, leading to the emergence of language pedagogy. The most widely referred to example is the audio-lingual method derived from behaviourism.

**\* An interdisciplinary Approach**

By the 1960s, applied linguistics began to embrace an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating insights from fields like psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics.

The shift broadened the scope of applied linguistics, allowing for a deeper understanding of language acquisition and usage. Consequently, concepts like cognitivism, comprehension, mental processes became widely used in the field of language education. It was at the end of this era that linguists started to explore the practical aspects of language in society and education, bridging the gap between theory and practice.

**\* Methodological Shift**

The 1970s were marked by a series of methodological shifts in applied linguistics. The communicative approach emerged as a significant development, focusing on real life language use and communicative competence. Language methods continued to evolve emphasizing communicative competence and proficiency, leading to more effective language instruction. However, Researchers started conducting empirical studies to improve language teaching and address practical language-related problems.

**\*Expanding Horizons**

The late 20th century saw the expansion of applied linguistics into various sub-disciplines. Translation studies, language policy, language assessment and sociolinguistics all became integral components of the field. Applied linguistics began addressing complex issues such as language diversity, bilingualism, language planning and others.

**\* The present day and beyond**

Today, applied linguistics remains at the forefront of addressing language-related challenges. It continues to adapt to the evolving needs of society in areas like language education, cross-cultural communication and language policy. As technology and globalization reshape communication, applied linguistics plays an important role in understanding these challenges.