

PROSPECTS OF COGNITIVE AND ECOLOGICAL LINGUISTICS

Ganna Prihodko

Professor, DSc, Zaporizhzhia National University,
e-mail: anna.prihodko.55@gmail.com, orcid.org/0000-0001-6220-5333, Ukraine

Andrii Galaidin

MA, Polonia University in Częstochowa,
e-mail: a.galaidin@live.ap.edu.pl, orcid.org/0000-0002-5236-1495, Poland

Abstract. This article deals with the development of ecological linguistics as a new object of study in modern linguistics. It examines the peculiarities of language research approaches as an instrument of harmonious lifestyle of the people as well as an important means of social contact in the international research. The anthropocentric and eco-centric lines may be distinguished as competitive modes in the development of modern humanitarian sciences for the reason that they introduce different approaches to investigating processes and results of human activity. The subject of ecolinguistics is the interaction between language, man as a linguistic person and his environment. Language is considered as an integral component of the chain of relationships between man, society and nature. Special attention is paid to the notion “meaning” from the point of view of ecological linguistics. It is stressed that meaning is the link connecting the representations of interaction with the verbal and non-verbal objects in the mind of the person.

Keywords: ecolinguistics, biolinguistics, language ecology, meaning.

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Introduction

A distinctive feature of the development of modern science is that, today there are many disciplines that include simultaneously several different directions and arise at the junction of already existing scientific paradigms. This can be explained by the fact that human society continues to develop and become more complex, and in order to continue to make new discoveries, it is necessary to develop research in related fields. In the twentieth century, the appearance of such science as ecology, resulted in very interesting changes in the focus of investigation, and now the ideas expressed in biology, begin to be applied to the consideration of language (*Lafford, 2009: 673–696*).

Language cannot exist in a vacuum. It is the product of long adjustment with the people who speak it and the environment in which it is used (*Haugen, 1972*).

Ecolinguistics is a new branch of linguistics, which explores the role of language in the development and possible solution of ecological and environmental problems. Ecolinguistics as a original scientific direction in the study of the linguistic sphere of human habitation and society is formed on the identification of laws, principles and rules common both for the environment and for the development of language, and explores the role of language in the eventual resolution of environmental problems (*Logua, 2007: 10*). The ecolinguistic approach presupposes its own interpretation of anthropocentrism (*Couto, 2014: 122–128*), which, from the point of view of philosophy and methodology of science, fully reflects the modern process

of ecologization of scientific knowledge and is considered by scientists in the context of this process. The ecologization of scientific knowledge is a natural process in the formation of ecological thinking, the essence of which is the conscious "adjustment" of human actions under the laws of the biosphere.

The subject of ecolinguistics is the interaction between language, man as a linguistic person and his environment. Language is considered as an integral component of the chain of relationships between man, society and nature.

The **aim** of this paper is to present different approaches to the study of language as an instrument for the formation of a harmonious environment for the life of a person and the most important means of social interaction.

Modern stage of linguistics is characterized by coordination of various scientific opinions regarding its object – language. With all the differences in the interpretation of natural language dominant directions converge that this phenomenon can be understood and explained only by considering it as an integral part of the cognitive system, i.e. all of the structures and mechanisms that combine to provide cognitive and intellectual person's activity.

Within the cognitive approach category of knowledge is considered the key one. It combines knowledge of the world and language system. This focus of linguistic research makes problems of solving linguistic semantics in terms of categorization and conceptualization of cognitive processes of surrounding reality particularly urgent.

In spite of the significance of the concept "Ecology", its important social role, it is not quite a study in linguistics. This determines the topicality of this article.

The basis of the conceptual content of the linguistic ecology as a scientific field constitute the basic value orientations related to ethical standards, concepts of morality, spirituality. The subjects of linguistic ecology are the culture of thinking and speech behavior, formation of linguistic taste, protection and improvement of the literary language, identification of ways and methods of its enrichment, the purity of speech habitat.

Methodology is determined by the material, the theoretical nature of the article and is of complex character. It integrates theses of the cognitive theory and linguoculturology. Linguistic observation is used while studying the ecological characteristics of different language phenomena.

Ecology as a compulsory component of language

Ecolinguistics as a scientific field that combines ecology and linguistics studies the interaction between language, human being as a language personality and his environment, which is the influence of the environment through the person and society on language, on the one hand and the influence of language on the moral and spiritual level of society, on the other.

Ecocentric model of consciousness is based on the recognition of man not as the owner of nature and its center, but as one of its competent members. Thus, the ecocentric consciousness implies the rejection of the hierarchical world view in favor of its diversity, the harmonious coexistence of its variants (*Fill, 1993*). Language variety is part of ecolinguistics because of the relationship between diversity of local languages and biodiversity.

In the sphere of scientific description, this approach introduces global "human-dimension" objects: the biosphere, the noosphere, ecological systems. The question of the interaction of language and environment in his report was raised by the English linguist

M. Halliday, who put several theoretical questions to linguists: to what extent language structures and units of texts are involved in covering issues related to the problems of the environment; if a language can make these problems more understandable, accessible and close to a person (*Halliday, 2001: 175–202*). At the same time, the very concept of interaction began to be interpreted by scientists as the mutual influence of language and the environment, as a result of which both objects change, since they, being interconnected, form an "ecological system".

The continuous dynamics demonstrate that language can be both an instrument in analysis of eco-related problems and be the object of ecological research. On the one hand, language conceptualizes as a "living organism" that influences the way we perceive the world and interrelate with it. On the other hand, language is created by the environment, in which it is functioning (*Steffensen, 2013: 2*).

Language is regarded as an integral component of the chain relationship between man, society and nature. Functioning and development of the language appears as an ecosystem, and the world – as a linguistic concept. In recent years appeared many investigations devoted to the consideration of cognitive and linguistic aspects of phenomena of surrounding world, the essence of conceptualization and categorization as basic cognitive processes. A language should not be treated simply as a structural system (phonology, morphology, syntax, etc.) which exists somehow independently of its speakers. It is impossible to understand the language without the speakers.

The fundamental principles of cognitive field of the first generation were questioned and main principles of cognitive science of the second generation (as it is conventionally called by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson) (*Lakoff, Johnson, 2003*) were worked out. Cognition is seen by scholars as the activities of the human body, carried out in the course of interaction with the environment in order to adapt to the environment for survival and reproduction.

It is very important to note that this thesis and other postulates formulated by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson were reflected in biocognitive theory developed by Chilean neurobiologists H. Maturana and F. Varela. Researches proposed an interesting conception of living systems, based on the principle of living systems are studying systems, and life is a process of cognition. In other words, an attempt was made to find an explanation for the phenomenon of knowledge as an effective action, which enables a living organism to continue its existence in certain environment. In addition, scientists emphasize that the center of any knowledge is observer.

Observer is defined as a living system with a circular organization (for such system U. Maturana uses the term "autopoetic") (*Maturana, Varela, 1987*). All aspects of the living system are imposed on this fundamental circularity and maintained it, ensuring its continuity in successive interactions in the continually changing environment. The living system exists as long as it retains the ability to self-reproduction and adaptation. Thus, reproduction and adaptation are the basic conditions for a single organism's life and for the whole species.

Subjects surrounding the individual are an integral part of his niche, so interactions with them serve his adaptation within niches. These interactions tend to have the orientation character. One organism can modify the behavior of another one, first, when they are connected with each other in such a way that the previous behavior of one determines the subsequent behavior of another, such as courtship or in a fight, (such behavior is the basis of friendship and enmity).

Secondly, one organism can orient the behavior of another organism on part of his fieldwork, which is different from the part that includes this interaction. This happens only if

the interaction spheres of organisms coincide. The second type of orienting interaction is the basis for any language behavior.

The states of activity of the nervous system, resulting from the interaction with an object is qualified as elementary representations. Representations of all possible interactions with a particular object or with similar objects as well as interactions with different objects (but at the same time and in similar situations) are combined into complex representations.

This complex representation is considered as a structural unit of the experience / memory, or concept. In other words, ecological concept is a set of representations of interactions with the object or objects (non-linguistic and linguistic), characterized by the causal dependency and promotes effective adaptation of the organism to its environment.

Ways of development of biocultural theory of meaning

The ecological analysis of language draws on a wide range of linguistic tools including critical discourse analysis, framing theory, cognitive linguistics, identity theory, rhetoric and systemic functional grammar to reveal underlying worldviews. The true environment of a language is the society that uses it as one of its codes. Language exists only in the minds of speakers and functions only when dealing with other speakers and with their social and natural (natural) environment. Partially, the ecology of the language has a physiological nature (interaction with other languages in the speaker's consciousness), partly social (interaction with a society in which language is used as a means of communication) (*Calvet, 1999*). Ecology of language depends on people who study it, use it and pass on to other people.

The ecological outlines in linguistics use different terms for investigating the relations between the language of humans when describing the environment, such as "language ecology", "the ecology of language" or "ecolinguistics" but it is generally accepted that the worldview on the interaction between humans and the rest of life on earth has a dual nature: anthropocentric (nature as machine) and biocentric (nature as mother) (*Verhagen, 2008: 1–3*). The ecological approach to discourse is revealed as contributing to the formation of a new, ecological way of thinking and worldview, and also involves the development of a future ecologically conscious society and the internal ecological culture of personality

The cognitive science includes a relatively new field – interpretation of concepts based on the approach that foresees addressing the concepts and the language as a cognitive, biological and social system representing the area of communicative interactions of the organism and the environment. As for understanding of the nature of concepts, it does not correlate with the above provisions which reflect our perception of the essence of concepts. According to biocognitive science, the concept is not an abstract ideal essence; it represents physiological material processes that occur in the individual's mind.

Biocognitive approach implies the consideration of language as a natural biological phenomenon connected with the adaptive function of an individual as a living organism in a social environment. Man is a living system, the characteristic features of which are the principle of circular organization and the principle of mutual causal relation in the system "man – environment" (*Garner, 2005: 91–101*). The necessary condition for the existence of a living system is adaptation. Language serves as a means of preserving human adaptation in a social environment.

The individual cannot be separated from the environment in which he lives. During all his life a person cognizes surrounding reality, gains new knowledge about the world,

organizes this information in a certain way and correlates it with the already known facts. Thus, the processes of conceptualization and categorization are of particular importance for systematization and updating the obtained knowledge, for its successful application in different situations.

Specific character of conceptualization is to understand the information received the construction of mental objects and events leading to the formation of certain beliefs about the world (concepts), while the categorization is a psychical act, that organizes, systematizes and sorts representations of interactions in the person's mind, which reduces the infinite variety of the individual to visible number of units (*Zaharova, 2012: 64–66*). Together they represent a complex mental process, aiming at the effective incorporation of a human being into the surrounding environment.

Each person has a unique experience of adaptation to the environment; hence, the set of representations and concepts of causal relations is also to some extent unique. In this connection, it is lawful to talk about the individual level in the structure of the concept. However, a man lives in a certain society, which is a part of his niche. The existence of an individual directly depends on the interactions with other individuals, as they orientate him on his effective behavior in a specific situation. In this regard, it is possible to speak about social and national levels of concept. Despite the great variety of niches, some entities are common to all, such as macro-niche "Earth." Concepts-universals are the result of interactions with such entities.

Cognitive patterns that exist in the person's mind, are diverse according the channels of incoming information, or, in terms of the biological approach, they are formed because of different kinds of interactions with elements of the niche. Therefore, we can distinguish the concepts of sensory perception of the world and concepts of mediate knowledge.

The main feature of the human's mind is an ability to react not only to direct stimulation, but also to the sound stimulus – a word. Due to the language, a person perceives and feels the world differently than an animal – he studies it in the process of communication. From the point of view of the biological conception of language, its main function is to broaden the cognitive domain or the area of human's interacts.

Meaning is the causal links connecting the representations of interaction with the linguistic and non-linguistic objects in the mind of the individual. Linguistic behavior of people forms part of the environment, being the existential domain. Relation of mutual causality between the individual and the environment requires causal connections between the state of his nervous system (consciousness) and language as a social adaptive behavior. Therefore, analysis of the meaning of language units helps to identify relatively authentic structure of concept.

According to the unified biocultural theory of meaning, an inherent characteristic of living systems is the ability to create meaning. Meaning – is the relationship between organism and environment, defined by the value that some aspects of the environment have for this very organism. Such meaning can be defined as an ecological one, in the sense that it is not entirely subjective or objective, but is determined by the interaction between the organism and the environment.

Conclusions

In connection with the solution of applied problems of modern society, ecolinguistic approaches are increasingly in demand in various spheres of the practical life of society: in

resolving legal disputes, in the formation of principles and style of communication that contributes to the creation of a supportive environment for life of people in society, the public and cultural health of the nation and the entire globalized community.

The ecological approach together with complementary disciplines such as culturology, cognitive science, biology that openly embrace functionalist perspectives forces us to admit many important and significant roles and relationships that language plays in the life of our society.

From the standpoint of biocognitive approach, conceptual world view can be defined as the totality of concepts or complex representations present in the mind of the individual reflecting collective experience of the direct and indirect (in the process of upbringing and education) interaction with the environment. This conceptual system itself is the object of interaction.

Biocognitive approach to the study of the functioning of linguistic signs allows us to identify the specific character of the interaction of language, man, society and nature in their inseparable connection both in concrete cultural and historical conditions and in the process of evolutionary development from the standpoint of existential priorities. It means orientation and adaptation in the world of social and natural relations, survival and reproduction in the surroundings.

Linguistic ecology dynamically reflects natural changes of linguistic conceptualization of the world, the relationships between social, cultural and linguistic processes. In this regard, it should be noted that this field has vividly marked interdisciplinary character, integrating diverse knowledge of humanitarian nature.

In linguistic ecology functions a number of interdisciplinary phenomena and their respective terms, which are in a state of constant interaction and intersect with different linguistic fields of terms. Thus, linguistic ecology relates to the field of complex and multifaceted phenomena of culturological and humanitarian character.

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