



Ecolinguistics and prospects of anthropocentric research in linguistics

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Abstract

The article reviews the major directions of ecolinguistics that is one of the new paradigms in the linguistics of today. The peculiarities of studying of language as means of formation of harmonic environment of social interaction are dealt with. When estimating ecologically meaningful linguistic objects, it is suggested to distinguish two approaches: ecology of language and ecology of a human being. Each of the approaches is mediated by language factors salient in different statuses. The article deals with the approach for researching ecolinguistic problems from the position of the influence of language/text environment on human health and the principles of health safety. A human being of today who lives in the information society has unavoidably become an object of the influence of numerous phenomena of semiotic nature. Communication through natural language seems to be one of these phenomena. The findings by this approach will allow to balance several issues of human environment instability and extend the facilities of ecosystem by integration of special notions, methods and ways of linguistic analysis and giving them status of universal instruments for humanitarian tasks implementation.

Key words: ecology, ecolinguistics, consciousness, object of ecolinguistics, ecologic environment, information environment, text environment, social interaction, harmonic environment, positive/negative influence.



1 INTRODUCTION

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. This article is written with the aim to state a key significance of eco-centric approach and to offer issues for designing new profiles in modern linguistics – an ecological branch of communicative linguistics which calls for stating new ethic values in evaluating both material and spiritual activity of people.

Anthropocentrism may be undoubtedly referred to a dominant paradigm of modern sciences. Its comprehensive methodology has been gaining power since the 1970s of the 20th cen. when Man and the value of existence or survival were offered to be viewed as a merit of great significance in modern Europe. Owing to the ‘post-non-classical’ science paradigm a complex of interrelations that determines any item of human existence or activity – either in material or spiritual life of community – are put into the focus of attention thus aspiring the study and assessment of any objective criterion in its relation to Man and human environment [3; 10; 11; 17; 19; 32; 36]. With regard to “eco-dimensional” approach such phenomena as biosphere, noosphere and ecological systems are being introduced into scientific discourse on a large scale these days, stimulating the process of ‘ecologization’ in humanitarian sciences with the demand to examine facts of social and cultural life of peoples through the paradigm of human environment [16; 21; 29; 32]. The ecological roll has influenced minds of modern linguists and several schools plead for a change in the commonly accepted anthropocentric interpretation associated with philosophy and methodology of humanitarian sciences [1; 10; 18; 19; 21 23; 24; 25; 29].

2 METHODS

We used the method of analysis, comparative and statistical methods.

3 DISCUSSION

An eco-centric model of consciousness is based on the assertion that Man shouldn’t be esteemed as a core element of universe but a part of natural environment, eco-centric consciousness is associated correspondingly with the issues of diversity and harmony of Man’s coexistence in natural environment rather than of intellectual domination and global convenience. The term «ecology» is said to be coined by Ernst Haeckel in 1866 to designate a new sub-discipline of biology aimed at studying the relationship between living organisms and the environment. However, the content of the term has been significantly modified and got far beyond its biological science lately. For more than the centenary period of its existence the term «ecology» has been transformed time and again,



so “ecology” of today is an integrative study occupied with investigating a wide range of humanitarian issues [9; 23].

The popularity of the eco-centric line and its implantation into some branches of modern linguistics may be explained undoubtedly by the global ecological changes in the 20th cen. thought to be caused mainly by human activity. Axiological aspect of natural environment preservation has contradicted the anthropocentric outlook, as a result the principles of ecological ethics are thought to be much more important for the issue of human survival than anthropocentric ideals of value. Some linguists made a number of attempts to enlarge the terminology of the branch, in particular, the notion of language environment was singled out as ‘language encirclement and a complex of social code factors’. In the works devoted to language social history several basic factors (“ecological fluents” as demographic, social, political, cultural, psychological, integrative, and linguistic ones) were singled out, they were thought to determine linguistic behavior of social groups and personalities [15, p. 7].

Alvin Fill’s works made a valuable contribution to scientific development of ecolinguistics into a new trend as the scientist introduced definitions of new fields in ecolinguistics: a) ecolinguistics, as a general term for all spheres of research that combine both ecology and linguistics; b) ecology of language (languages) that deals with interaction between languages and language diversity reservation; c) ecological linguistics with the applied methods and principles of ecology for studying language (for example, the notion of ecosystem); d) linguistic ecology that studies interconnection between language and ecological problems» [18].

Michael Halliday, the British linguist, raised the question about the widespread destruction of ecosystems, thus making linguistics relevant to the issues and concerns of a new time. He noted correlation between ecological context and consequences of language usage [21, p. 178]. The notion of correlation was firstly interpreted in the context of mutual influence of language and environment, which could result in changes of both objects as their interconnection creates «ecological system».

Due to works by A. Subetto [10] the notions of ecological crisis and ecological catastrophe in the sphere of language were set for consideration. From his standpoint these phenomena are implemented in globally oriented world with the market and community unification, elimination of nation states and ethnic diversity, cultures unification under the “post-modern” slogan, Americanization of “mass culture” patterns and unification of languages after all. These processes



are considered to be indicators of coming global spiritual, cultural, and anthropological catastrophe [11].

4 RESULTS

Targeted at working out new priorities in human values modern researchers stand for regulating various types of human activity from novel positions developing eco-ideas and offering some other aspects for the development of the ecological paradigm [4; 5; 12; 25]. Firstly, Russian linguists raise voices against the 'post-written era' and warn against destructive power of new technologies that threaten standards of language correction. To retain the language linguists of Russia monitor standard of speech patterns in various types of discourse, dwell on stylistic and rhetoric aspects of communication [9; 13]. In any case the efforts of linguists, who are busy with monitoring the language-in-use (collecting, analyzing, leveling language units from various types of discourse), are aimed at preserving native language, eliminating negative social trends in its usage, preventing language regress that consists in impoverishment its literary and expressive means, leveling functional, rhetoric, axiological imbalances.

Secondly, an interlingual aspect of ecolinguistics may be singled out. It studies language in connection with its ethnic environment and investigates reasons of language extinction. To this field we would refer works on language history which accurately record every language, highlighting its cultural and social value for the history of humanity. According by the evidence of Prof. Yartseva [14, p. 10], the interlingual aspect of language ecology is associated with an issue of language historical changes, deterioration and death, the phenomena that are closely connected with natural history of the peoples, political, socio-economic and ecological catastrophes that are caused by military capture or sharp reduction of natural habitat [20; 22; 26].

Moreover, Russian linguists are developing a translingual aspect of the ecolinguistics in the context of language and culture interactions. It is aimed at studying processes of one language transformation under the influence of another, in other words, linguistic transposition of language units under the influence of another national (cultural) environment. Language is considered to be a means of culture translation within one society or among multilingual societies in intergenerational, diachronic and simultaneous perspectives. The scientists concentrate their efforts on the forms of language integration, lingual form coexistence, language tolerance, besides the principles of intercultural communication are noted [28; 33; 34].

The eco-centric line has brought another novel aspect into the focus of attention. As a result, an eco-communicative theory is under development, it offers to study the way people influence each other



while communicating in situations of formal and informal types [12; 31; 35]. Mental and speech acts, that represent full range of human activities with regard to such constituents as motivation (intention), aim, strategy and tactic, ways and means of aim achievement, results (spoken message) and emotional impact, are claimed to be included into the ecological paradigm of humanity survival. Accordingly, numerous speech acts that can hurt or insult humans (as hooliganism, humiliation with speech acts, lies, abasement, speech theft, fraud, etc.) are considered an excess of power and authority, they are announced to be equated to the types of criminal acts [2].

5 SUMMARY

Language power and speech creativity are viewed in ecolinguistic light. The art of text production is closely tied to such non-linguistic phenomena as author's intention, motives of speech activity, cognitive procedures of speech formation, and emotional effects of speech product on linguistic personality, small or large social groups [2; 4; 5; 8]. This new branch of linguistics has deep connections with intra-psycho states of Man or social and cultural aspects of social well-being and survival of civilization, its sacral values and cultural senses without which no state or nation can exist and develop [6]. Thus, it has been defined that human consciousness is a 'textualized' entity. Under 'textualization' we mean the ability to create and interpret speech that is presented either in oral or written form, but it is typical of Russian school of linguistics to think about the body of the text as space with some discrete components that are associated with the conceptual world, its lexical and grammatical representation, compositional models, etc. [7, p. 282]. For a long time similar approached to research used to be carried out separately within the framework of psycholinguistics, ethnolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, sociolinguistics, and language sociology. In ecolinguistics they get a common methodological basis and practical purpose.

6 CONCLUSIONS

Ecology of communication seems to be a promising paradigm of linguistics, a vital part of the theory of speech that studies the ways personal communicative intentions are enforced during communication without weakening the opponent's communicative position or humiliating him by inappropriate speech acts. The detection of the mechanisms of text influence on the addressee, methods of verbal representation (relevant or not) of the referential situation image in textual forms seems to be prospective both in theoretical and practical values. The findings by this approach will allow to balance several issues of human environment instability and extend the facilities of ecosystem by integration of special notions, methods and ways of linguistic analysis and giving them status of universal instruments for humanitarian tasks implementation. Application of them



into various spheres of modern communication will help to set principles of well-balanced information policy, reduce tension in interpersonal and cross-cultural communication, lessen conflicts and improve relations in the global community of the future.

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