Skilled linguistic action: From DL to radical ecolinguistics

Stephen J. Cowley

CHI and the COMAC Cluster, University of Southern Denmark, Slagelse cowley@sdu.dk
History: Turning from synchronic/diachronic, one can focus on how persons self-fabricate and make use of skilled linguistic action.

As we are ‘knowing’ observers, we can reject ‘explanation’ for practical theories.

Proposal: (a) specify enabling conditions and consequences; (b) aim at the long term; (c) and reclaim lived experience (here, now): towards a new discipline –radical ecolinguistics.
Language cannot be ‘explained’

Far from being a code, **languaging** is part of living (1st order activity that is perceived in linguistic or 2nd order aspects).

People link activity with wordings. They re-evoke aspects of what has been said and heard and, thus, come up with novelty.

So we need a new perspective….

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Distributed life, language and cognition –especially language
Life has no centre – heterogeneity and self-fabrication are the mark of every living cell: they enable symbiosis, connection, competition, evo-devo, consortia etc. In life’s capacity to self-fabricate, it is systemic or distributed.
Naturally, cognition is also distributed

Pilots use fabricated systems that use pilots
Language is distributed too

“Radical as its consequences may be, *prima facie*, there is nothing implausible about a distributed view of language. Linguistic theory notwithstanding, even casual observation suggests that, during iterated human activities, what we ordinarily call ‘language’ spreads* across brains, bodies and world. Seeking ways of understanding this spread... we suggest that this central part of language is grounded in activity that is social *and* microcognitive.”

*Today, I would write ‘self-fabricates’ - SJC.

15 years of distributed language

We reject ‘code views’ –and ‘explaining’ language as synchronic, diachronic, neural or social.

Languaging is living; in the Anthropocene, it dominates the bio-ecology.

Languaging –and language –is multi-scalar activity in which wordings play a part, thanks, in part, to observers (who are also actors).

Human interactivity (“sense-saturated coordination”) creates, sustains and enables us to hone cognitive and affective powers.

We individuate as persons: a language stance allows us to become observers who use the verbal and the historical.

Repeatables sustain insight/accomplishments; we re-cognise events, things, situations, persons etc. We re-enact social ‘reality’ use critique disclose what is suppressed and, in history, change what is out-there.
Dialogical, ecological & multi-scalar II

- Repetition grounds action and social reality: *synergies* permit purposeful listening and, willful speaking-acting.

- **Enskillment** permits practices that use traditions, customs and linguistic reflexivity.

- Once linked with symbolizations, *writing and numbers* (among other things) become integral to languaging.

Observers bring the past to the present and imagining: multi-scalar temporality drives self-fabrication.

Subjectivity links interactivity to judicious use of the language stance (e.g. ‘trying to understand’).

Beliefs/truths/gaps/errors etc. help people to navigate institutions, practices, technologies by ‘thinking’. In the Anthropocene, social ‘realities’ dominate the actual bio-ecology.
The city and its suburbs

**Wordings:** (i.e. an aspect of languaging where echoes of the past permeate action, perception and ways of attending).

**Activity:** talking, chanting making/reading texts –also thinking, dreaming, singing mumbling and using media (e.g. rocks, texts, & digital technology).

**Heterogeneity.**
Skilled linguistic action

Spontaneous coordination grounds languaging and observing.

We learn to make use of feeling, insight, avoidance of error, reward, memory, convention, imagination, habit, skills etc. etc.

Accomplishments shape dispositions for skilled linguistic action (e.g. re-semiotising).
Action demands an observer
SLA is constructive

1. SLA meshes life, language and cognition – the dialogical results are systemic and distributed.

2. The results enable persons to use enskillment to say things; they make us into users of the said -- observers.

3. Given dependence on observers, theory, approaches or models cannot ‘explain’ skilled linguistic action (or human forms of life)
The observer is central.

Languaging is particular, unfinalizable, poetic and enables meaning-making.

Part II

Implications for theories
Languaging, like life and mind, cannot be explained

1. For some, this is philosophically unacceptable—it is incompatible with the mission of finding answers to the universe’s ‘big questions’.

2. Some find it scientistic (‘wordings’, ‘cognition’ ‘interactivity’); for others, a focus on enabling conditions is not scientific enough—it ignores issues of bio-mechanisms.
And where is language?

- Others complain that we underplay sense making or how linguistic signs are integrated with activity by dialogial beings.

- Others worry that there is
  - No way of using linguistic literature to set up hypotheses.
  - No recipe for showing research gaps of societal relevance
  - No theoretical frame or ‘object’ of study
  - No one method or set of empirical findings
Walking in Ryle’s footsteps

For Gilbert Ryle, a concept of mind is immensely useful: yet the term mind invites a category mistake—it ”lacks any referent” and is, in fact, based in dispositions.

There is parallel to language; languaging is useful and builds on dispositions (1st order) —a concept of languaging/language is needed to grasp wordings.
So... we need practical theory

Concepts like ‘mind’ (or languaging) often work indirectly.

They can alter practices, culture, technology and the bio-ecology (not just ‘reality’).

To see mind as computational changes lives – of many creatures. Careful use of languaging can raise (human) well-being
Languaging can be used to better environments (as we engage)
Enabling conditions &/or consequences

Analysis shows use of affordances:
• insights, shared features, enabling conditions, problems (and how they are) avoided, etc.

In parallel, many pursue
• methodology, models and ways of using future predictors.
Where is language?

Why should linguists be interested?

What can linguists offer?

Can ‘languaging’ be of direct value?
A practical theory

Of value to whom? (Whose interests does it serve?)

Let’s turn from analysis/models to how, if at all, we can reduce environmental degradation

(II) long term effects (of a mistaken idea of language)
(III) languaging experience.
Ecological civilization

- Let’s build a new discipline (they say in China)
- Relations between minority languages and local ecologies.
- Discourse about the environment – bringing about harmony or positive change.

I add, if based on languaging, it can aim at raising bio-ecological awareness.

Huang Guowen
How does languaging influence environments (and emerge from living)?

(a) Indirectly –organised use of languaging & SLA

Long term, languaging can

(b) Change practices, beliefs etc. –by showing their limits and returning to experience

Languaging can arise in direct/directed acts of

(a) Listening/interpretation/voicing/performing
Thinking long term

Peer review is a cornerstone of science/wissenschaft.

Often seen as a genre of quality control on knowledge production whose values are Communitarian, Universal, Disinterested and Organised Scepticism (Merton, 1942).

Yet, it is demonstrably, biased, non-reliable, and fails to show impact. This is the ‘crisis of science’ – a side effect of the post-academic university. So let’s analyse and model peer review as SLA.
Science: social organising and SLA

Peer-review is social activity based on SLA under genre constraints.

At best, it identifies ”perceived scientific value” (Secchi & Cowley, 2018).

A shift to ‘soundness’ has dangers for wissenschaft.

Implications for knowing

Science depends on SLA and the already observed.

- It leaves out *how* knowledge self-fabricates.
- It follows economic and political interests.

- Be wary of big theory. Good science is often local. And **we** need to include direct experience.
Satoyama: language in practice

SLA: implications for knowing

- Knowing links skilled linguistic action to self-fabricating.

- Things appear explicitly – for a living observer (who draws on many kinds of direct experience).
In conclusion -1- Observers and practical theories

No explanatory theory is possible in the life domain. Languaging (and SLA) enact living in the bio-ecology.

Practical theories of language/cognition can use analysis/models to invite action and use concepts like languaging to drive long-term change.
In conclusion -2-

Towards an ecolinguistic discipline

Experience of languaging can bring forth a lived sense of natural inclusion.

Long term change begins with (a) well-being; and (b) grasping –and extending the limits of ‘science’.

Using SLA, we can remake the idea of language by enhancing bio-ecological awareness.


