

# Social Roles as a Construct of Ecological Interaction: Diachronic Aspects

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**Abstract**—Ecolinguistics contributes to the understanding of how language serves to shape, nurture, influence, or destroy human relationships. Language is a part of the living world that allows directing the human activity. The focus of this study lies in researching of a human speech behavior, which displays the connection between the past, present and future of the humanity, and demonstrates the relationship between language, essence of life and human consciousness. The results of such interpretation find their presentation in the system of ideas concerning the world and, as a result, shape the principles of human interaction, which present a unique social and historical experience. The research material consists of dialogic fragments from fiction and film scripts of the XX and XXI centuries, which illustrate the changes in verbal and non-verbal behaviour of a discursive personality while implementing different social roles in the process of communication. The analysis of the differences in the speech repertoire of a discursive personality when performing various social roles is based on the principles of ecolinguistics, discourse theory and linguopragmatics. The methodological basis allowed to compare the rules of human interaction in the XX and XXI centuries and to project the direction of these changes in the human view of the world in future.

**Index Terms**—ecolinguistics, non-verbal behaviour, social role, speech repertoire, verbal behaviour

## I. INTRODUCTION

Language seizes the product of human cognition of the world and encrypts its cognitive engagement by its own tools, predetermining the growth and expansion of the human view of the world. The world picture is a dynamic cognitive framework, its author's universal view about the world, gained as a consequence of synthesizing the sensory background of cognition (Bondarenko et al., 2017). The expression of the ambient realm is included in linguistic units represented as a single part of the world's puzzle (Zhayvoronok, 2002, p. 53).

The ground of the world view comprises the phenomena of the surrounding reality, which are decrypted, consolidated and realized in individuals' and society's pictures and notions (Klochko, 2018, p. 48). Respectively, the framework of pictures and notions in the lingual world view shapes a versatile subject code that is generic to present and future generations (Skrynnik, 2021, p. 133). The linguistic world view reflects the connection between language, human being and human consciousness, and it can be treated as an interpretation of the past, present and future of the mankind.

Correspondingly, the ecolinguistic perspective to the study of natural languages is suitable in this way due to its holistic, interdisciplinary character and powerful explanatory potential (Pasynok et al., 2017, p. 130). The supposition of extended ecology (Steffensen, 2011) presupposes that ecolinguistics is enhancing by integrating validity and sense into ecological structures. As a consequence, it is argued that human ecology has acquired a profound and nonreversible sense. The term "sense-saturated" (Steffensen & Fill, 2014, p. 17) signifies that human being in particular eco-social surroundings interlinks with semiotic processes.

Ecolinguistic paradigm enables discourse to function as a source of shaping social relations and their product simultaneously (Shevchenko, 2015, p. 126–127). As a practical matter, discourse obtains the functions to stimulate the social evolution, which, in its turn, advances communicative competence, specifically, the validity of the utterance in a particular social context.

The **relevance** of the research is based on the study of the speech repertoire of the individual in the ecolinguistic perspective with a focus on diachronic comparison of the norms of human interaction in the XX and XXI centuries.

The **object** of research is presented by verbal and nonverbal communicative components, employed by a discursive personality while performing various social roles. The **subject** lies in the identification of pragmatic features and functions of verbal and nonverbal components in the interaction process used by discursive personalities while performing various social roles, in the diachronic aspect. **Research methods** are based on the speech analysis and traditional critical studies of discourse in the ecolinguistic dimension (Cowley, 2013; Steffensen & Fill, 2014; Stibbe, 2019). The **aim** of this study focuses on the analysis of the differences in the speech repertoire of discursive

personalities while performing different social roles in the institutional and everyday types of discourse, taking into account their diachronic changes.

## II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The need for ecocontrol, which has been increasingly discussed in recent times (Panchenko, 2013, p. 374), can be applied not only to nature and environment, but also to predicting the language policy for regulating communication, and harmonious relations between communicators. When investigating the variability of speakers' verbal and nonverbal skills of interaction in ecolinguistic perspective in diachronic aspect, we find it expedient to consider them in the configurations of social roles in the marginal and peripheral zones of discursive environment (Soloshchuk, 2016) in institutional and everyday communication. Social roles vary throughout the life cycle of the individual, and, accordingly, change with the ephemerality of historical evolution. Diachrony in the linguistic sense is a conditionally vertical section of language, in which the object of linguistic analysis concerns the development of language at a certain historical stage (Giacalone et al., 2013). The speech characteristics of a discursive personality in the process of performing social roles under the institutional and everyday conditions of communication have its differences in different periods of historical development of society.

In the XX century, the social roles were characterized by a clear distinction between verbal and nonverbal speech arrangement in the institutional and everyday types of discourse, as evidenced by 78% of examples of the illustrative material (100% are examples of discursive fragments containing demonstration of changing of social roles for the historic period of the early XX century). With the help of verbal and nonverbal repertoire, speakers differentiate the performance of their roles in non-nuclear areas of the discursive environment, as well as demonstrate a clear transition from performing roles under institutional and everyday conditions and vice versa.

Status-role relations are clearly reflected in communication in the institutional discourse (Skrynnik, 2019, p. 158). Thus, under these circumstances behavioral norms are to be preserved (Morozova, 2018, p. 81). Taking into account the basic features of the ecological communicative strategy (Panchenko, 2013, p. 387–388), which are in general opt to save physical and emotional health, it can be stated that the basic principles of ecological communication are not to have a detrimental effect on human health and psycho-emotional state (Skrynnik, 2021, p. 133). Respectively, the non-ecological communication consists of communicative means, strategies and tactics which do not coincide with behavioral standards and harmony (Soloshchuk, 2016). That means that the ecological communication aims to preserve behavioral standards and principles of cooperation (Sedov, 2004) when interacting to any speech partner.

## III. RESULTS

In the example below, the discursive personality performing the social role of an attorney behaves politely and restrainedly under official business conditions. The attorney, as well as his partner, a judge, demonstrates adherence to the ecological strategy of communication with representatives of the peripheral zone of the discursive environment at the verbal level of interaction. Due to the non-verbal component, they can both open the veil that hides their true intentions, while remaining within the frames of courtesy:

(1) *[The scene of a trial in court]*

*Gilmer: [standing to object] Your Honor, I object. Mr. Finch is browbeating the witness.*

*Judge Taylor: [laughs outright] Oh sit down, Horace, he's doing nothing of the sort. If anything, the witness's browbeating*

*Atticus (Lee).*

Moral and ethical norms of communication are preserved with the help of polite direct addresses that emphasize the social status of the communicative partner (*Your Honor*), forms of polite refusal (*I object*), refusal is also performed with the help of a kinesic component (*standing to object*). The Judge shows his disagreement politely on the verbal level with the direct address (*Horace*) and explanation (*he's doing nothing of the sort*) but on the non-verbal level he expresses his ironic attitude more openly (*laughs outright*).

In today's world, in the XXI century, the boundaries between the performed social roles are less clear than in the XX century. Clear boundaries between the roles in non-nuclear areas of communication can be traced in 55% of examples of the illustrative material (100% are discursive fragments that demonstrate the change of social roles by a discursive personality during the historical period of the XXI century). The interlocutor's attention is drawn to both intensified and de-intensified use of nonverbal components, that is any deviation from the normative use of nonverbal components in certain stereotypical communicative situations attracts attention (Soloshchuk, 2006). And while communication in the XX century is characterized by the normative use of nonverbal components in non-nuclear areas of the discursive environment, in the XXI century intensified or deintensified use of nonverbal components is dominating, which are characterized by interaction with verbal components according to the principle of contradiction (Soloshchuk, 2006). If at the verbal level the observance of the principles of politeness and restraint is maintained, then non-verbal components, which are multifunctional in nature and can be interpreted in different ways depending on the communicative conditions, explicitly demonstrate the true intentions of the interlocutor:

(2) *BEN WHITTAKER: Hi, I'm Ben Whittaker. I received an e-mail about an interview for the Senior Intern Program*

*[kind of laughs at the idea].*

RECEPTIONIST: *Hey Ben, how's it goin'?*

BEN WHITTAKER: *It's goin' good. Real good. Thank you.*

RECEPTIONIST: *Excellent. Take a seat right around the corner and someone from Talent Acquisition will come get you.*

*[Ben thanks her]* (Meyers, 2014).

At the verbal level, the intern-speaker uses a polite form of explaining why he came to the office (*Hi, I'm Ben Whittaker. I received an e-mail about an interview for the Senior Intern Program*) but at the nonverbal level he demonstrates irony (*kind of laughs at the idea*). Ben Whittaker is 60 and he looks for a job in a modern company, this idea makes him feel embarrassed. The nonverbal component demonstrates the true psycho-emotional state of the speaker, but the double nature of the nonverbal component, when it is possible to pretend that one does not notice it or considers it irrelevant to the communicative process, allows to keep within the ecological norms of communication.

The tools for preserving the ecological strategy of communication and avoiding the contradictory vector of communication in XX century were nonverbal components:

(3) *"Dr. Burnham will come when it is possible," Adam said coldly. Then after a moment in which he met the resentment*

*and accusation, he said, "Governor, I think that it would be a good thing for you to lie down. To get some rest."*

*"No," the Boss said hoarsely, "no."*

*"You can do no good by not lying down. You will only waste your strength. You can do no good."*

*"Good," the Boss said, "good," and clenched his hands as though he had tried to grasp some substance which had faded*

*at his touch and dissolved to air.*

*"I would advise it," Adam said quietly, almost softly. Then he turned an inquiring glance upon Lucy.*

*She shook her head. "No, doctor," she almost whispered. "I'll wait. Too" (Warren, 1946, p. 398-399).*

Nonverbal components can implicitly hint at the communicator's indifference (*Adam said coldly*); weakness (*the Boss said hoarsely*; *clenched his hands as though he had tried to grasp some substance which had faded at his touch and dissolved to air*); resentment (*Adam said quietly; almost softly*); inquiry (*Then he turned an inquiring glance upon Lucy*); denial (*She shook her head; she almost whispered*), but did not report directly about his emotional or physical state and intentions.

The communicative processes in the XXI century are characterized by verbal expression of dissatisfaction, which can be expressed both implicitly and explicitly, but most often openly due to the transparency of everyday discourse:

(4) RICHARD BROWN: *Who are you, why should we know you, what do you want to do with your life?*

CLAIRE: *Okay. I'm Claire. I'm from Upstate New York. Why you should know me? I don't know. [chuckles] Yeah. I don't*

*know [shrugging] I guess because my uncle is the president of the school.*

RICHARD BROWN: *Ew. Henry Wright is your uncle?*

CLAIRE: *Yes.*

RICHARD BROWN: *I can't stand the fuck.*

CLAIRE: *[laughs] I don't really like him either.*

RICHARD BROWN: *That's very good to hear. I mean, he's so peach melba. Just slimy and...[makes his face]* (Roberts, 2018).

The speaker when performing the role of a teacher expresses his negative attitude to the school president openly (*I can't stand the fuck; he's so peach melba. Just slimy*). The non-verbal kinesic component is used to support the verbal expression (*makes his face*).

Implicit statements or non-verbal reflection under different communicative conditions can serve as mitigator marks for avoiding the transition of a communication process into a contradictory direction. Implicit statements are characteristic of different configurations of social roles in both institutional and everyday types of discourse. However, for everyday communication explicit statements are more characteristic, which is due to the "transparency" of the everyday discourse. The ability to operate the implicit statements is effective in obtaining the desired results if the ecological strategy is used.

Everyday discourse is characterized by free choice of verbal and nonverbal components. Such freedom of choice expands the boundaries of ecological communication. Violation of the principles of harmonious communication under everyday circumstances is a rather vague concept due to the high level of spontaneity of everyday communication. Only excessive violation of the norms of harmonious communication in everyday discourse can be considered non-ecological from the point of view of ecolinguistics. Verbal and nonverbal signals, words and actions must correspond to the meaning contained in them (Bibi, 2001); for example, it is unethical to break the communicative process by interrupting speakers before they have expressed their point of view, changing the subject when the other wishes to express a different idea, or nonverbally distract others from the topic under discussion.

Communication in everyday life in the XX and XXI centuries is also characterized by certain features. In the XX century, the use of polite forms and care for the emotional state of the partner are almost mandatory. It can be stated, using modern terminology, that much attention is paid to the ecological control of speech:

(5) *So we moved on through the corridor to the big lobby, where we would take an elevator up to his (the Boss') office.*

*Some of the men lounging along the corridor stepped back a little and said, "Howdy-do, Governor," or "Hi, Boss," but*

*the Boss only bowed his response to the greetings* (Warren, 1946, p. 420).

The communicative situation of "interaction of neighbors" in the time range "the XX century" is characterized by a general focus on cooperation, as evidenced by the constant use of polite direct addresses (*Governor; Boss*); phatic greetings (*Howdy-do, Governor; Hi, Boss*), kinesic (*the Boss only bowed his response to the greetings*) and proxemics (*Some of the men lounging along the corridor stepped back a little*) components for expressing politeness. The communicators present a cooperative-conformist type of a discursive personality.

The communication of the XXI century speakers is characterized by a lower degree of cooperation and a lower level of attention to establishing harmonious relations. The following example demonstrates deviations from the principles of ecological communicative strategy, because the general direction of the interaction can be described as more conflicting:

(6) *PHILLIPE: The neighbor keeps parking there. He thinks it's his space. [door alarm beeping] Not for much longer.*

*DRISS: How's it going?*

*PHILLIPE'S NEIGHBOR: [chattering on phone] What?*

*DRISS: Am I bothering you, Blondie? Want a coffee?*

*PHILLIPE'S NEIGHBOR: What?*

*DRISS: [muttering angrily] Come on. [taking him out of the car] Go on, read this!*

*PHILLIPE'S NEIGHBOR: "Keep free at all times."*

*DRISS: Louder!*

*PHILLIPE'S NEIGHBOR: [reading loudly] That's the way.*

*DRISS: [shouts and pokes a sigh] Read it all!*

*PHILLIPE'S NEIGHBOR: "Reserved parking."*

*DRISS: Get that into your thick skull and move! Go on, Blondie, piss off!* (Nakache, Toledano, 2011)

The interaction of modern communicators, which refer to the representatives of the peripheral zone of the discursive environment (Soloshchuk, 2016), is characterized by a lower level of politeness presented both verbally (*Come on; Go on, read this! Louder! Get that into your thick skull and move! Go on, Blondie, piss off!*) and nonverbally (*taking him out of the car; shouts and pokes a sigh*). The general direction of communication acquires a more contradictory direction than a cooperative one.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

Language, which is an instrument of human interaction, ensures the existence of humanity. Contacts between people are so diverse that even a natural language sometimes becomes inconvenient or insufficient for human interaction. The resourceful mind uses new tools that are more appropriate in such situations. In this case, the main thing is the new tool of interaction, the language moves to the background. Flexibility and the ability to adapt to different living conditions encourage humanity to seek new means of interaction with each other and with the environment.

Examining the speech behavior of communicators in their performance of various social roles in the aspect of diachrony, we observe a tendency to blur the boundaries of verbal and nonverbal performance of social roles played by a modern discursive personality and to modify the principles of the ecological communicative strategy. Verbal and nonverbal behavior in the performance of social roles under the institutional and everyday conditions of communication of the XX century are characterized by a clearer organization and order in comparison with the XXI century. Current trends in globalization and the rapid pace of development of the society have a direct impact on communicative habits of speakers of various range.

At the present stage of human development there is a tendency to strive for conciseness in speech. Simplification of speech means is observed at the level of direct addresses (disappearance of honorary addresses and respectful and polite expressions), reduced forms of courtesy statements. In this case, nonverbal components play a greater role in understanding the emotional state of the partner and his communicative aspirations. That is, the reduction of the speech repertoire of a modern discursive personality leads to the expansion of his nonverbal passport. Nonverbal communication is becoming a new tool that makes interaction more effective and, at the same time, short-lived. This, in turn, requires communicators to be competent in treating the non-verbal passports of interlocutors. After all, maintaining the physical and emotional health of the addressee and his communicative partners under the conditions of institutional communication is the key to successful negotiations and maintenance of partnerships. The use of ecological communicative strategy in everyday discourse prevents from creating conflict situations and promotes the cooperative development of communication.

The **perspective** of further research gives an opportunity to study the speech repertoire of a discursive personality in a wider time range, taking into account gender and cultural factors.

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