

A NEW PARADIGMATIC APPROACH TO GO BEYOND COMMUNICATIVE MANIPULATION: QUALITY IN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract. Invalidating and eventually marginalizing manipulation from the communication process has not been discussed so far in the linguistic research due to a lack of theoretical perspectives how to approach this possibility. Generally, both language users and linguistic scholars have succumbed to the (apparent) omnipresence of this communicative-psychological mechanism in interpersonal relations. The general ecolinguistic model of the holographic sign and the general model displayed by the multimodality communication mechanism open promising perspectives to recast the topic from the theoretical point of view. These theoretical tools enable us to investigate the possibility to minimize the actual weight of manipulative behaviours in language/communication once we decide to switch the starting-point paradigmatic platform: from the classical, formal and materialist paradigm of the mainstream linguistics, to the holistic paradigm of the expanded science. The level of quality of communication is raised as a result.

Keywords: new paradigm, ecolinguistics, communication, manipulation, quality of communication

INTRODUCTION

Quality in interpersonal communication refers to the general aesthetics of language forms (Cameron, 2012), to structural correctness and adequacy, but probably above all to the reliability of the message being put through and to the truth value of the message exchange. Truth in communication has been a re-occurring theme in the language studies; whether we consider the traditional approach of Jakobson and his referential function of language (cf. Jakobson & Halle, 1965), the Gricean quality maxim (Grice, 1975; Yule, 2010); the structure-based semantics and its truth conditions; or the more contextualised pragmatic approaches, where linguists study systemic tools of a given language and their informative and influential potential on the receiver of the message. We can generalise that in quality communication, the communicator not only enjoys the pleasure of the elegant and well-styled verbales, but foremost, trusts in the overall authenticity and accuracy of the exchange, at least from the subjective perspective of the communication partner's experiential and cognitive filters. Language/communication manipulation has been a recognised threat to quality communication between people, and it constitutes one of the key topics in linguistic studies. In this brief note we would like to propose a change of the paradigmatic stance which in effect will allow the communicator to go beyond manipulative mechanisms and minimize all types of communicative manipulation.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Shifting the paradigm: from the Newtonian, classical paradigm to the postNewtonian, holistic paradigm. Paradigms, thinking styles, and collective status quo

Today, very few scholars before starting the research work in the topic to their liking consider the paradigm and the model of reality within which they intend to do the scholarly work. By means of the nonconscious habit, most Western scientists do the research within the dominating materialistic, linear, structuralistic framework of the Newtonian paradigm (Bache, 2018; Bogusławska-Tafelska & Haładewicz-Grzelak, 2017). In the meantime, objective cognition in the scientific process is not possible, as whatever we do cognitively, we activate our mental representations of reality, our mental maps which together with our habitual (individual and collective) thinking and communication styles function as the filters to the objective world around and inside us (Fleck, 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; Walach *et al.*, 2014). The beginning of the new millennium gives us two alternatives: we can either choose the mainstream classical, materialistic-deterministic-structuralistic Newtonian paradigm and locate our thinking and research in it; or, the postclassical, holistic, post-Newtonian paradigm (Friedman & Hartelius, 2015; Walach & von Stillfried, 2011; 2019). This initial paradigmatic choice seems essential today before any linguistic analysis starts. The Figure 1, below, illustrates the change of the paradigmatic starting point when undertaking linguistic research.

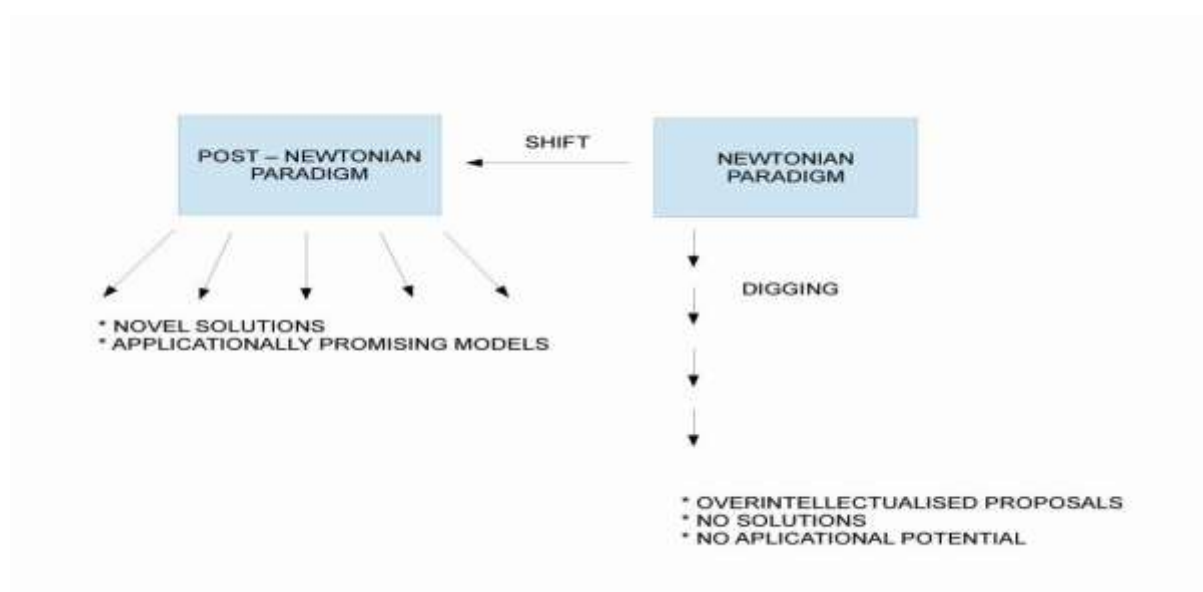


Figure 1. A paradigm shift and its benefits for the applied sciences (BogusławskaTafelska, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

If we look at the language/communication process from the standpoint of a materialistic paradigm, we perceive it as a system of forms, a technical tool to mediate messages within the communication situation. In it, language/communication is based on material forms, structural patterns and conventional meanings more or less tightly attached or derived from the material lexemes. In this paradigm, manipulation in communication has been a relatively easy maneuver to undertake for covered or mischievous personal purposes, just by manipulating the language forms one is using. Hence, for decades linguists have been perplexed at the problem of how to navigate the interlocutor out of this communication maze. In the recent years, the language sciences have brought the emergence of ecological linguistics built as a meta-model within the post-Newtonian paradigm (Bogusławska-Tafelska, 2013; 2016). The shift of the paradigms – from the classical to the holistic one - has opened new and relatively easy to implement possibilities (i) to look at theoretically, (ii) to deal with intellectually, and (iii) to educate young generations out of the manipulative behaviors in interpersonal communication. So, how can we marginalize manipulative attempts in interpersonal communication? The theoretical and applicational solutions may be derived from the ecolinguistic model of multimodality communication. Here we would like to present our central hypothesis that once the communicator realizes the existence of this complex communication mechanism accessible in every communicative situation, he/she starts actively benefitting from it, as a consequence, any manipulative aspects of the interpersonal contact will no longer pose a challenge. To be more specific, the ecolinguistic model of multimodality communication offers the following new perspectives on communication:

- the process of communication in the ecolinguistic understanding, involves not just subjective and re-creative cognition, but also: photoreception, mechanoreception, chemoreception, thermoreception, electroreception, magnetoreception, deep structure/intracellular processes which have communicational character and purpose and which are quantum-mechanically conjugated, communication processes happening at ‘the seam of life’ (Bogusławska-Tafelska, 2016); hence, we start considering theoretically the communication process being a multi-modal, multidimensional process, extending beyond the (neuro) cognitive or social processes;
- in our ecolinguistic model we define the communication sign as having a holographic character; this is a metaphorical rather than technical usage of this concept;
- a holographic sign when generated by multi-modal organisms, transpersoanly within a given communication situation, is of a multimodal nature; in this sign the totality of the message is compressed to be unpacked by the receiver(s).

We co-create, co-send and co-receive messages not just with the participation of our minds/brains/cognition, but also down the systemic organisation, with the activation of biochemical systems, pheromone systems, or the deep quantum-mechanical cellular processes, which build up the transpersonal aspect to all communicative activeness (cf. Vitiello, 2001; Bertalanffy, 1968; Plotnitsky, 2004; Penrose, 2005). This 'holographic' specificity of a communication sign can only be acknowledged and made use of when there are conscious communicators who have activated their organismic modalities. The holographic sign will not be fully benefited from by the 'language speaker/hearer' of formal linguistics, because the speaker/hearer is focused on the role of the mind in communication, and 'only' speaks and listens to the message. The multimodality model of communication embraces not only cognitive aspects of communicating, but a vast array of non-cognitive modalities, which are active in other than the mental/neuronal structures of the organism. We, as human communicators, all are naturally equipped by multimodal communicational machinery, but we have to be aware of this potential and make a decision to listen to it, in order to benefit from it.

Communicative manipulation requires the partnering recipient. Manipulation realises itself in interpersonal and social settings. It operates on the communicative process (Bogusławska-Tafelska, 2011). So, it is the communicative awareness of the message receiver in the relation which needs to be addressed in the research and which constitutes the potential way out of the manipulative mechanism. We propose in our model that by modifying our communicative awareness and becoming conscious communicators, we can remove ourselves from potential manipulative dyad, while remaining emphatically neutral with regard to the manipulating person we have come into contact with. The multimodality communication mechanism introduced in this brief note suggests that human language/communication is a life process, going beyond the cognitive awareness and will of ego-communicators involved in a given communicative situation. It is a collective, complex, multidimensional mechanism of relations building among living systems.

CONCLUSIONS

In this concise presentation, we intend to put to debate the theoretical possibility to lower the communicative impact of communication manipulation in human interactions. For an in-depth look at this proposal we kindly direct the reader to another study we wrote on the topic (Bogusławska-Tafelska, Wyciński & Malenko, in press). Presently, we but incite the theoretical analysis. Human communicators have at their disposal more communication modalities than the audiovisual (neurocognitive) mode studied by mainstream linguistics. We are naturally equipped with several supporting bodily local and nonlocal communication modalities, which when acknowledged and paid attention to – allow us to be much more autonomous and discerning when it comes to receiving the complete incoming message in a given communication situation (Bogusławska-Tafelska, 2013; 2016). However incoherent, internally chaotic or lacking in integrity the incoming message may be – when a communicator is fully conscious of his/her multidimensional language mechanism, he/she will not be manipulated by the linguistic forms coming at him/her for the manipulative purposes by the communicative co-participant(s). This enhanced communication capability has the potential to effectively raise the general quality of interpersonal communication.

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