



ENTREVISTA COM ECOLINGUISTAS

Adam Makkai (Universidade de Illinois)

BRIEF PRESENTATION

Adam Makkai was born in Hungary (1935). He went to the United States in 1957, where he began teaching German, Russian, French, and Latin. He completed his Ph.D. in General Linguistics in 1965, with a dissertation which became the book *Idiom Structure in English* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972). By this time Makkai used Sydney Lamb's theoretical model of stratificational linguistics, now known as neurocognitive linguistics. In this context, in 1974 he founded the Linguistic Association of Canada and the United States (LACUS), whose symbol is "the Great Lakes, providing a natural border between Canada and the United States", standing "for more than the convenience of acronymy. Most of his academic career was spent at the University of Illinois in Chicago (UIC) of which he became Professor Emeritus. He received several awards, as the Presidential Gold Medal from the President of Hungary (1999). Makkai and Alwin Fill are the authors of the first two introductions to ecolinguistics ever to be written, the former in English and the latter in German. Makkai's introduction is mentioned in the first question below. The first three ecolinguistics anthology published in Europe have one chapter written by him. These are: 1) "Die Welt als Bewusstsein und Paraphrase: zur gesamtökologischen Fundierung des menschlichen Sprachverständnisses mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Sprachphilosophie Wilhelm von Humbolts und ihrer Relevanz für die theoretische Sprachwissenschaft des 21. Jahrhunderts", published in Fill, Alwin (ed.). *Sprachökologie und Ökolinquistik* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1994, p. 77-91); 2) (with Valerie Becker Makkai): "The case for ecolinguistics", in Kettmann, Bernhard & Penz, Hermine (eds.). *ECONstructing language, nature and society* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, p. 105-117; 3) "The role of the human voice in the eco-semantics of human interaction", in Fill, Alwin; Penz, Hermine & Trampe, Wilhelm (eds.). *Colourful green ideas* (Bern: Peter Lang, p. 219-236). In *ECO-REBEL* Makkai published two articles: 1) Porque ***ecolinguística***, v. 1, n. 1, 2015, p. 22-37; 2) Da gramática pragmo-ecológica à ecolinguística (1973-1993) v. 2, n. 2, 2016, p. 37-41. More information on Makkai's professional activities are available in Louise O. Vasvári's article "Ádám Makkai: Polyglot linguist, poet and literary translator between languages", published in *Hungarian Cultural Studies: e-Journal of the American Hungarian Educators Association*, Volume 6 (2013): <http://ahea.pitt.edu> DOI: 10.5195/ahea.2013.178 (accessed in 14/05/2019). This interview take place between 2002 and 2004.

- **ECO-REBEL:** Professor Makkai, in the Introduction of the book *Ecolinguistics: ¿Toward a new **paradigm** for the science of language?* (London: Pinter, 1993) you say that the term "ecolinguistics" was suggested to you by Professor Einar Haugen at the Congress of Anthropological Sciences, in Chicago. When was that?

- **Adam Makkai:** In 1972 in Chicago at the Hilton Hotel.

- **ER:** When did you begin associating the words "language" and "ecology"?

- **AM:** Still back in Hungary between 1954 and 1956.

- **ER:** When did you use the term "pragmo-ecological linguistics" for the first time?

- **AM:** Look at my homepage under <atlantis-centaur.org> and go to the English button, then under publications, you will see an article by that title. It appeared in Italian in the early 70-es in *Linguistica teorica ed applicata* [It is also published as "A pragmo-ecological view of linguistic structure and language universals", *Language sciences* v. 27, 1973, p. 9-23 [Editors of *ECO-REBEL*]).

- **ER:** When you published the above book, did you know about Alwin Fill's book *Ökolinquistik: Eine Einführung* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1993)?

- **AM:** No, not at all.

- **ER:** Did you know about Claude Hagège's use of the term in 1985?

- **AM:** I read Hagège's book but saw no mention of ecology in it. I may not have read carefully enough. Hagège is A-OK with me.

- **ER:** We do not understand why stratificational grammar (neurocognitive linguistics) did not succeed like generative grammar. It is entirely in line with the new way of seeing the world introduced by relativity theory and quantum mechanics as well with ecological thinking. So, why did generative grammar succeed, despite its totally (and avowedly) cartesian basis?

- **AM:** For simple political reasons. Chomsky succeeded in selling his ideas to Vietnam War resisters. He is also a much better P.S. than Lamb. The MIT people used "Wissenschaftspolitik" to intimidate all opposition.

- **ER:** We can see that stratificational grammar is the right model to deal with the endoecology of language, i.e., the study of the language "structure" without ignoring its relations with its environment (to use your distinction between endoecology and exoecology of language).

- **AM:** The strat people themselves ignored my book. Lamb is all tied up in the mechanics of brain neurology. It is like picking TV SDETS apart and not having a clue what the program writers had in mind.

- **ER:** It is true that the so-called "Non-linear phonology" uses the concept of tier that, in the end, is a stratam. Why didn't they take it over from Stratificational Grammar?

- **AM:** Pick up a copy of *Readings in stratificational linguistics* (1973), edited by A. Makkai & D. Lockwood (Alabama University Press). This is a sad chapter in intellectual history and may well be a recapitulation of what went on in Greece 2.400 years ago between the "regularists" and the "analogists" (see *An introduction to linguistics*, by Francis Dinneen (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1967)).

ECO - REBEL

- **ER:** Could you mention at least one difference between stratificational grammar and generative grammar?
- **AM:** SG is a better model to deal not only with the endoecology of language (grammar). It is also able to account for the interface endoecology/exoecology, i. e., the relations between language and its environment.
- **ER:** Thank you very much, Professor Makkai.
- **AM:** You're welcome.

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