



ENTREVISTA COM ECOLINGUISTAS

Jørgen Christian Bang & Jørgen Døør (Syddansk Universitet – SDU/ University of Southern Denmark - earlier *Odense University*)

BRIEF PRESENTATION

Jørgen Christian Bang was born in 1946 in Odense, Denmark. He studied Music, Philosophy, Latin (Copenhagen University 1965-66), and Danish, Nordic, German, and Scandinavian Languages and Literatures, Linguistics, (Odense University 1966-74). He was Associated Professor in Danish Language & Communication (OU/SDU 1974-2018). In 2018 he became Professor Emeritus.

Students rebellion and Union representative for students 1966-74; and for researchers and teachers 1976-2018. Member of the Board of the University of Southern Denmark 2012-2018 representing the scientific staff. Working for democracy, freedom and equality, “Education and research for life and people, not for profit”. Practicing music in amateur symphony orchestras and choir; free school, climate and peace movement. An ecological way of life together with his wife Anne; five children and eight grandchildren.

Jørgen Døør was born in 1933 in Copenhagen, Denmark. Studies of Philosophy and Psychology, University of Copenhagen; Mathematics and Nordic Languages, Teachers Training College, Copenhagen. Head of Department, University of Southern Denmark. (OU 1966-1997). At present: Free-lance researcher, novelist (published 14 novels with his wife, Dorte Bay Madsen), pacifist, vegetarian, and ecological activist.

INTERVIEW

- **ECO-REBEL:** The first publication of yours concerning ecolinguistic matters we know of is “Language, ecology and truth – dialogue and dialectics”, in Alvin Fill’s collective book *Sprachökologie und Ökolinquistik* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1996, p. 17-25). Is it really your first ecolinguistic publication?

- **Jørgen Bang and Jørgen Døør:**

No, already in 1987 JCB published *Antydninger af en økologisk sprogteori (Outline of a Theory of Language and Ecology)*. At the AILA 9th World Congress (Thessaloniki 1990) we met Frans Verhagen and together with him and Richard Alexander we decided to make Eco-Linguistics a theme for a symposium at the next AILA 10th World Congress Amsterdam 1993. We succeeded and published *Papers for the symposium Ecolinguistics: Problems, Theories and Methods. AILA '93 Amsterdam* (Eds. Alexander, Bang, Døør 1993 Odense University) (ISBN 87-89349-09-1).

In the foreword we defined the papers and the symposium with the following words:

“[...] The essays exhibit a very broad diversity in theory and methods, and a deep concern about the integrity of the planet’s ecological communities and systems.

The contributors seem to share the idea that our language-games are of real importance for our life-styles, and that one aim of applied linguistics is to contribute to a change in our use of language so that it becomes more sensitive to the ecological problematics.

The aim of the booklet is to facilitate the theoretical dialogue, and deliver the conditions for the improvement of the level of the discussions that take place at AILA conferences.

The initiative that finally resulted in the symposium was taken by Frans C. Verhagen, Richard Alexander, Jørgen Chr. Bang and Jørgen Døør.

Odense, June 2, 1993”

In our own paper “Eco-Linguistics: A Framework” we presented some dialectical models for Eco-Linguistics, e.g. *Core Contradictions of Social Praxis* (p. 32), *A Semantic Matrix* (p.33), *A Dialogue Model* (p.37), *Model of Deixis – the Reference Model* (p.40).

(Furthermore we presented a discussion of the category “Subject”, referring to M.A.K.Halliday’s three different kinds of subject (Halliday 1985:33), i.e. *Theme* (psychological Subject, “that which is the concern of the message”), *Subject* (grammatical Subject, “that of which something is being predicated”), and *Actor* (logical Subject, “the doer of the action”). We reference to *a deixis analysis* we added a fourth kind of Subject, or Actor, referring to the person who utters the clauses, and a fifth kind of Subject, namely the speaker/writer in the actual situation. Then we made the following model:

In the situation of communication –	Halliday writes, that	Pragmatic Person/Subject
In the universe of discourse (context) –	X said/wrote, that	Semantic Person/Subject
In the text –	<i>The duke gave my aunt this teapot</i>	Syntactic Person/Subject

We exemplified our models by a deixis analysis of two juridical texts, laws, concerning the

conditions for organic production, the one a Danish “Act on Organic Farm Production” (1987), the second an EEC “Council Regulation on organic production of agricultural products and indications referring thereto on agricultural products and foodstuffs.” (1991)

We underlined that these text examples are constitutive parts of the ecological situation and context in which we are involved – thus they are not context- nor situation-free examples.

In 1994 we published the essay “Ecolinguistics & Logical Deixis” (Bang & Døør 1994).

In 1996 “The Dialectics of Ecological Experiences. An essay in Eco-Linguistics with a Deixis Analysis of a Newspaper Text commenting the Rio ’92-Summit on the Human Environment.” In: Bang., Døør, Alexander, Fill and Verhagen (eds. 1996), *Language and Ecology • Eco-Linguistics • Problems, Theories and Methods. AILA ’96*, Jyväskylä, Finland. Essays for the AILA ’96 Symposium. Odense University.

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- **EC**: In several publications you mention a series entitled *Sprogteori* I-VIII, Odense (1985-1995). Was it the beginning of dialectical linguistics or did this begin in 1971, when the Bang & Døør collaboration started off?

- **JB&JD**: Yes, we collaborated since 1971 being parts of a working group at the faculty of arts/humanities at Odense University with the aim of developing an experimental two- year cross-disciplinary basic education for humanistic studies. (1971-75).

We participated in the Pragmatic turn of linguistics and philosophy since 1967. In 1973 we wrote "Language, Theory and Conditions for Production" published in *Pragmalinguistics. Theory and Practice*. (Ed. Jacob Mey, Mouton: The Hague, 1979).

During the 70th and 80th we developed our **dialectical theory** of language, communication & ideology by a critical analysis and discussion of the dominant theories and practice within science and philosophy; we underlined that universities are themselves a part of the society and culture, dialectical related with the (bad) standing of the nature-culture in relation to all the dialectical contradictions, i.e. class, race, sex, age, authority, ideology, culture-nature, town-country, private-public.

In 1977 (Bang & Døør 1978 “Language, Institutions and classes”) we introduced the double logic of capitalism and bureaucracy. During the seventies and eighties, we contributed to discussions, theories and analyses on **language, order and power** concerning classes (subject-/middle-/object-/residual-class) , sex/gender (male/female), age (child/adult) authorities (institutions, schools), implying the three dimensions of Nature, Society, and Ideology/Mentality.

We presented our thoughts at (1) national and international scientific conferences, especially AILA (International Association of Applied Linguistics); (2) in our networks of study groups, and (3) in our lectures at universities and university colleges. In order to give students easily access to our theories and analyses we published the series of *Sprogteori* I-IX 1985-1998, printed at Odense University Print.

In 1990 we established *ELI Research Group: Ecology, Language & Ideology* at Odense University. Many scholars joined the group during the next decennium, e.g. Anna Vibeke Lindø, Jeppe Bundsgaard, and Sune Vork Steffensen to mention three students that became professors in Odense and Aarhus. Also some of our international colleagues joined the group being “corresponding members of ELI” from about 1996, e.g. Adam Makkai (Chicago), Richard Alexander (Vienna), Alwin Fill (Graz), Hermine Penz (Graz), Peter Finke

(Bielefeld), Adelaide Chichorro Ferreira (Coimbra), Martin Döring (Hamburg/Nottingham), Wilhelm Trampe (Bielefeld), Harry Perridon (Amsterdam), Frans C. Verhagen (New York), Peter Mühlhäusler (Adelaide).

-EC: Is there any English translation of this long-term investigation? Does the book *Language, ecology and society* (Bang & Door, London: Continuum, 2007) contain some of its ideas?

-JB&JD: Yes, the book contains most of our ideas and we thank Sune and Joshua for their help in the edition. For further English titles, please look at the selective bibliography. We are now planning to publish our English papers at the home page www.jcbang.dk

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-EC: We know that J. Bang is a linguist and J. Døør is a philosopher. Why did you decide to collaborate?

-JB & JD: We agreed on what languaging was, how to do research, and why we wanted a better world characterized by peace, solidarity, equality and diversity. As an integrated part of the before-mentioned scientific and pedagogical experimental education at Odense University from 1971-1975 we did as teachers collective research in an explicitly transdisciplinary organization. Thus, we joined each other in theory and philosophy of language and developed our dialectic concept of language and communication. Since we have practiced both individual and common production, sometimes two of us, sometimes together with other scholars, locally and internationally.

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-EC: Do you see any considerable difference between your “dialectical linguistics” and “ecolinguistics”?

-JB&JD: Both terms apply to other phenomena and praxis: Dialectical linguistics deals with all areas and problems of linguistics, and Ecolinguistics is defined as a broad umbrella term for theories, problems and methods that contributes to the problematic of the ecological crises, global, national and local. Our contribution to ecolinguistics is a dialectical ecolinguistics, and our ecolinguistics is an example of our dialectical theory.

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-EC: In the 1996 work there are many ideas that we consider sources of inspiration for our ecosystemic linguistics: 1) “the dialogue as the minimal unit in linguistics”; 2) language exists only in a context; 3) transdisciplinarity; 4) the three dimensions of “bio-logics”, “ideo-logics”, and “socio-logics”, etc. However, figure 1 (p. 19) suggests that you consider the “segment” through “dialogue, utterance, deixis” as well as “situation, persons, context, topos” as “Classical Linguistic Terms”. Don’t you consider them as also belonging to dialectical linguistics?

-JB&JD: Yes indeed, they belong to dialectical linguistics; however our point is that the classical terms by our dialectical concept undergo important shifts of definition and understanding; the ‘segments’ become dialectically interrelated with each other and as such not separable from text, co-text, and con-text, and the context of the linguist, and other persons that deal with the text and analysis.

-**EC**: The logotype of the Brazilian Meetings on Ecolinguistics (EBE) reads: *Ecolinguista sum; linguistici nihil a me alienum puto*. Do you agree with this? Why?

-**JB&JD**: Roman Jakobson used the second part of the logotype in his famous 1958 speech where he was asked “for summary remarks about poetics in its relation to linguistics” (Style in Language, 1960:350). In our dialectical tradition any phenomenon is only a part of a hole. The canonical scientific disciplines are developed as-if they were the neutral experts or authorities on their respective objects of research (cf Saussure’s definition of linguistics). Transdisciplinary studies transcend the mono-logic, and furthermore the dialectical studies transcend the monopoly of valid knowledge so that the scientist becomes only a part in a never-ending public discussion on the matter of facts and the facts that matters. The point is that ecolinguistics is one of the ways of developing both linguistics, language and communication into a more context-sensitive direction.

-**EC**: In other words, do you agree with the idea that ecolinguistics should be a general framework – an ecological one – for the study of any language phenomena, including grammatical ones?

-**JD**: Yes, naturally.

-**JB**: Yes, or more precisely, ecolinguistic studies may include studies of any language phenomena. We have elaborated historical and syntactical, phonetical, and morphological studies, both on modern and old Danish languages and writings based on our Dialectical Ecolinguistics. Especially we will mention my theory on the Runes, presented in *Runes: Genealogy and Grammatology* (Odense University 1997). This theory relates the runic writings directly to the pre-classical “alphabets”, developed and used in the area around the Mediterranean and the Black Sea - before the classical Greek and Latin alphabets. The Runes have all the characteristics of letters implying graphic forms of order and value similar to the tradition from the Hieroglyphs and several Middle East writings such as Hebrew and Arabic, similar iconic indications of semantic fields, e.g. ‘ox’, ‘house’, ‘door’; graphic indications of salient phonetic features, e.g. lips, teeth, tongue, nose, mouth, aspiration; graphic indications of systemic interrelations of the signs, e.g. vowel-consonant-relations and consonant-consonant-relations. The observations and theory underline the importance of being aware of the original expressions and their historical situation & context.

The theory is opposed to a Danish (nationalistic) tradition that see the runes as a Danish invention based upon the Latin alphabet. The Runic Futharc is an appropriate writing system for the old North-West-Germanic languages that immigrated to Scandinavia around the first century BC together with the Danes and the Nordic mythology.

Our theory is also opposed to the linguistic assumption that a linguistic sign is *arbitrary* and random. We say that the linguistic signs in any interesting and vital manner are multidimensionally *motivated*. The same viewpoint can be used in understanding the newborn child’s development of signs and languages by analogy and creative imitation; natural languages relate to the human body and mind and the family social life in their natural context.

-**EC**: The kind of ecolinguistics we practice in Brazil, ecosystemic linguistics, does not agree with the definition of language – by most theories of language – as an instrument of communication because we think it reifies language. What do you have to say about this?

-**JB&JD**: We agree, and we think that most theories of language are based on unhealthy

narratives which practice systemic alienation. Language is not a thing or an instrument. Human utterances always belong to the humans that are parts of the relevant situations of communication. A language is always the language of some bodies, and somebody's more than others. Cf. our general theory of language in e.g. LES 2007.

-EC: Don't you think that many essays purportedly ecolinguistic could just as well be done from a, let's say, sociological – or any other one – point of view, provided that it deals with an environmental problem?

-JB&JD: May be, we, however, cannot remember one. The terms are always defined in the specific context of communication praxis and discourse universe, implying both the Natural, the Social, and the Ideological/Mental dimensions.

-EC: Can a discipline be defined only by its object of study?

-JB&JD: No, certainly not, because that presupposes reductionism. A discipline is defined by the institutional order and the persons involved. Cf. our discussion on Saussure and Hjelmslev and other structuralists of the 20th century. JCB's master thesis in 1974 had the title: *Lingva, Lingvist, Lingvistik* (Lingua, Linguist, Linguistics) and our article, "Language, Theory and Conditions for Production" underline the same point (*Pragmalinguistics. Theory and Practice* (Ed. Jacob Mey 1979)).

-EC: If we apply an existing theoretical model, like Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, to the analysis of an environmental problem are we doing ecolinguistics?

-JB&JD: May be, many good ecolinguistic studies have been done with reference to CDA and Norman Fairclough. We prefer to underline the dialogue as the unit and the dialectics of the text, the universe of discourse and the universe of communication. And the dialectics of nature, society and ideology.

-EC: In the same vein, if we investigate an environmental disaster picking some concepts from (biological, philosophical) ecology and use them metaphorically are we doing ecolinguistics?

-JB&JD: Certainly, studies on metaphors are relevant in doing ecolinguistics. We often talk about *Metaphors, Modality and Deixis* as important parts of any dialogue, text and communication. E.g. Bay / Döör / Steffensen, "Modality, Ecology, Metaphor", www.metaphorik.de 04/2003.

-EC: We understand that ecolinguistics should look at its object of study from a holistic point of view. Do you think that all the essays recently published in Europe and elsewhere follow this principle?

-JB&JD: To the best of our knowledge: No.

-EC: How would you define ecolinguistics?

-JB&JD: Generally speaking, "ecolinguistics" is an umbrella term for linguistics concerned with the ecological problematics. Paraphrasing the foreword in AILA 1993: Ecolinguistics exhibit a very broad diversity in theory and methods, and a deep concern about the integrity

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of the planet's ecological communities and systems. Thus we also imply a moral dimension.

-EC: Do you think that culture does not have anything to do with nature and that social facts derive from social facts?

-JB&JD: A culture has three inter-dependent dimensions, i.e. a natural, a societal and a mental. And the dimensions cannot be deduced, or derived from each other without a misleading reductionism. That means that any phenomena, everything and everybody is dialectically defined by all the three dimensions.

-EC: We are all aware of the fact that ecolinguistics is considered a minority's, "alternative" discipline. Would it be good if it one day becomes mainstream linguistics?

-JB&JD: In a few years mainstream linguistics will be different forms of ecolinguistics and then the critical challenges will change to other streams.

-EC: How do you see the future of ecolinguistics?

-JB&JD: As healthy and flourishing. Ecolinguistics is today highly relevant for the climate discussion and transformation of our cultures into more sustainable, friendly, solidarity, and diversity life forms.

-EC: How would you summarize your approach to ecolinguistics?

JCB&JD: Our book from 2007 is the best answer to that question. Please read our forthcoming essays:

Dorte Bay Madsen & Jørgen Døør, "Dialectical Eco-Linguistics & The Hidden Curricula"; Jørgen Chr. Bang, Jeppe Bundsgaard and Anna Vibeke Lindø, "Climate change and new life conditions imply transformation of our cultural orders. - A Dialectical Eco-linguistics contribution to an eco-civilized development." (ICE-4)

-EC: We suspect that Denmark is the region of world where there are more ecolinguists per square kilometer, and this justifies the title "Danish School of Ecolinguistics". Do you see a reason for this?

-JCB&JD: Our tradition of self-organized democratic, non-governmental unions and movements (e.g. labour, free school, peace, organic ecological production and life forms, culture and sport).

-EC: Is there anything you would like to add? Feel free to use the space you need.

-JCB&JD: We are both honored and grateful for your interest in Dialectical Ecolinguistics.

-EC: Thank you very much Professor Bang and Professor Døør.

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