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The specificity of linguistic anthropology in the thought of Alessandro Duranti

Introduction

Just as widely known and generally speaking, the discourse on human language is very interesting. As such, it accommodates a lot of views and justifications from different disciplines ranging from linguistics, philosophy of language, linguistic philosophy, anthropology, to mention but a few. The importance of the function of language in human life is the reason why many authors see in language the basic tool for understanding human being. This view of language has allowed the creation of a new anthropological discipline called linguistic anthropology. An important contribution on this field has been made by the American anthropologist of Italian descent, Alessandro Duranti.

In his discourse on language, he officially and in a systematic way highlights the specificity of linguistic anthropology maintaining its basic perspective on the functionality of human language; by so doing, he constructs a new definition of human being based on his concept of language. In fact, it is of his view that language functions not only as a mode of thinking but more importantly as a cultural practice, a sort of social action which entails and also determines ways of being in the world.

This view consequently became his project; a project which he excellently defended, deriving and supporting his arguments from J. L. Austin's notion of "performative utterance" which could be traced back to Austin's posthumous, *How To Do Things with Words*; from Grice's theory of communication based on his concept of communicative intention. He was also influenced by B. Malinowski's verbal act theory, E. Sapir's notion of language as a social institu-

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tion, N. Chomsky's notion of linguistic competence and linguistic performance, speech act theory of J. R. Searle and so many others.

More so, his method or approach which was highly pragmatic and which tended towards naturalism is also enticing despite the problems that got associated with such. Thus, he would simply consider and as such reduce language to mere functionality and this invariably poses a big problem for actualization of man's social nature since it limits it. These issues therefore would be presented and discussed in the subsequent pages that follow.

1. Scope Of Linguistic Anthropology.

Linguistic anthropology is quite a unique discipline, considering its past achievements as much as for the perception of the future. The contributions of various researchers from different disciplines on the nature of language "as a social tool and speaking as a cultural practice, have made it possible to have a domain of enquiry that makes new sense of past and current traditions in the humanities and social sciences and invites everyone to rethink the relationship between language and culture".¹

Hence, an elaboration on this intellectual identity which linguistic anthropology has developed on its own would subsequently make it possible for an improvement of our conception and appreciation of language "not only as a mode of thinking but, above all, as a cultural practice, that is, as a form of action that both presupposes and at the same time brings about ways of being in the world."² In the words of Duranti also, "to say that linguistic anthropology is an interdisciplinary field means that it draws a great deal from other independently established disciplines and in particular from the two from which its name is formed: linguistics and anthropology."³ Now let us consider "linguistics" and "anthropology" as the two independent disciplines from which linguistic anthropology is formed.

Linguistics

Looking at the relationship between language and its derivatives is important to distinguish which came first in order to understand better and appreciate the history of man. More so, there are language principles that are "universal

¹ Duranti, A. (1997). *Linguistic Anthropology*, New York: Cambridge University Press, P.1

² Ibid

³ Ibid

by biological necessity and not mere historical accident”.⁴ It is therefore the declaration of this text that language stands alone as the greatest achievement of man and it is language, subsequently, that fostered a multitude of cultural products. Hence, the notion of language should be examined. In defining language, the contribution of Gilson. E, is quite interesting:

Language is for him [philosopher] what the linguist tells him it is... Some of them, for whom the fear of philosophizing is the beginning of science, methodically ignore or deny on principle the aspects of language use which provide reflection for the philosopher... These are precisely the aspects which retain the attention of the philosopher, for whom the philosophical constants of language are but a particular case of metaphysical constants... Philosophical reflection on language cannot lead to much, but short of holding all philosophers as senseless, there must be something in the reality of language such as it is that invites one to philosophize.⁵

In fact, the history of philosophical concern with language is as old as philosophy itself. In the *Cratylus* for instance, Plato explored the relationship between names and things and engaged in what today would be recognised as philosophy of language. It seems also that Aristotle speaks of language for the first time, in any case before speaking of it in the *Organon*, in the *De Anima* and within this work itself in the part devoted to sensible knowledge: the sense of hearing and its object.

Furthermore, Rene Descartes, the founder of modern philosophy, for instance, believed in the existence of universal language as the basis of the diverse languages which human communities use and is seen by Noam Chomsky as a precursor of the theory of innateness of linguistic abilities. Also, as a self-declared Cartesian, Chomsky provides a subjective view of language, claiming that language refers to certain mental states, which a linguistic theory will explicate. For him, “we should, so it appears, think of knowledge of language as a certain state of mind/brain, a relatively stable element in transitory mental state once it is attained; furthermore as a state of some distinguishable faculty of the mind –the language faculty-with its specific properties, structure and organisation, one module of the mind”.⁶

Moreover, Chomsky’s linguistic philosophical formulations were influenced by Kantian epistemology which tried to seek a synthesis between empiricism and rationalism. He owes much too, to the ideas of Plato and Leibniz. Also, such

⁴ Chomsky, N. (1975). *Reflections on Language*, New York: Pantheon Books, P.4

⁵ Gilson, E. (1988). *Linguistics and Philosophy. An Essay on the Philosophical Constants of Language*, Trans. John Lyon, U.S.A: University of Notre Dame Press, Pp xvii-xviii

⁶ Chomsky, N. (1986). *Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin, and Use*: West Port, Praeger, Pp 12-13

renowned linguists as Edward Sapir, G. Trager, and Robert Hall, have all and equally made effort in their own classifications but none of them has actually succeeded to appreciate the notion of language; as such, Davis, J, notes, “everybody uses language but nobody knows quite how to define it”.⁷ A meaningful understanding with which to continue therefore could be found in Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary. There, language is defined as “a systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings by the use of conventionalized signs, sounds, gestures, or marks having understood meanings”.⁸ This acknowledgement that language is not necessarily limited to sounds and possibly too, that some other animals are capable of something like it is quite interesting.

Having got a definition of language, we can therefore identify more precise characteristics. Firstly, we can identify displacement as a feature of language. This is the capacity to refer to an object, event, person or concept; it means, to talk about abstract ideas in an excellent way. In fact, displacement, “allows the users of language to talk about things and events not present in the immediate environment... [It permits] the human, unlike any other creature, to create fiction and to describe possible future worlds”.⁹

Secondly, language has an arbitrary nature. This is because of the fact that its linguistic form does not have any natural relationship to the items to which it makes reference. In other words, linguistic signs have a subjective relationship and as such, they do not match with the objects they identify. Thirdly, language is characterised by the fact of productivity, and the implication is obvious: the possible number of expressions in any human language is quite infinite. Fourthly, through a process known as cultural transmission, language is passed from generation to generation.

Again, considering the fifth point, another feature of language can be identified as discreteness. This feature maintains that there is a distinction in meaning because of differences in sounds. As such, each sound within a given language is treated as distinct, and it is feasible “to produce a range of sounds in a continuous stream”.¹⁰

Finally, language has a feature known as duality, which is linked to discreteness. As individual sounds, we could notice that none of the discrete forms holds intrinsic meaning, but “when we produce those sounds in a particular combination, as in *bin*, we have another level producing a meaning which is different from the meaning of the combination *nib*”.¹¹ Thus, Yule, G, specifies these aspects as the “uniquely human characteristics”¹² of language.

⁷ Davis, J. (1994). *Mother Tongue: How Humans Create Language*. New York: Carol Pub. Group, P.6

⁸ Ibid. P.8

⁹ Yule, G. (1996). *The Study of Language*. New York: Cambridge University Press, P.21

¹⁰ Ibid. P.24

¹¹ Ibid. P.25

¹² Ibid.

Having noted some of the qualities of authentic human language, the next question becomes: how is it different from animal communication? We can derive some of the answers as discussed very well in Davis's *Mother Tongue*. In it, in the so called "Nim Chimsky Project", Petitto maintains that, "apes are very complex cognitively and communicatively. They can be referential and intentional, and they can demonstrate a variety of cognitive capacities... [But] no ape or primate project... claims that these apes master all the aspects of human language ... there were key aspects of human language that they failed to master".¹³

But the issue instantly would be to consider these key aspects of human language which the apes could not master? Thus, relying on the fact of the sophisticated nature of human consciousness in which language is identified as playing a crucial role, and in which consciousness is also, as a result of the brain as it attends to output and pays serious attention to it, Petitto discovered that Nim Chimsky could not attend to the relevant aspects of the signing he was seeing¹⁴. More so, with reference to the apes that were the subjects of these studies, Petitto maintains, the language is "almost superfluous" and they are not fully aware of some of the information they are relating.¹⁵

Furthermore, the apes do not have lexical or vocabulary knowledge. They do not also possess a "phonemic inventory".¹⁶ In fact, animals are not capable of achieving complex syntax. They cannot even refer to abstract things that are not physically present. The ape, for instance, does not do that may be because, it does not have the relevant brain tissue Petitto argues, but despite how complex the brains of apes may be, they do not have the intricacy in the human brain or the language regions found in the human brain.¹⁷

Meanwhile, and of course, one can say that apes are not the only animals to be able to communicate effectively and as such, no one is arguing that these animals do not communicate as Petitto maintains further but the fact remains that, "communication and language are not the same thing".¹⁸

Hence, humans biologically are adapted for the ability, and this is no wonder then Davis notes that, "we are *Homo sapiens*, 'the thinking human.' Our brains are uniquely endowed with an innate ability to detect the basic rhythms and structures in sound or movement that can become the building blocks of

¹³ Davis, J. (1994). Op. cit., P.282

¹⁴ Cf. Ibid. P.283

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Care should be taken to understand it as essentially the collection of basic speech sounds or speech forms from which all human language is shaped.

¹⁷ Cf. Davis, J. (1994). P.284

¹⁸ Davis, J. (1994). P.283

symbolic communication.”¹⁹ Consequently, and as Yang Charles explains, “this means that the neural hardware for language must be plastic; it must leave space and possibilities to respond to... the environment.”²⁰

Anthropology

Anthropology deals with the study of humanity as most anthropologists would subscribe to. Its main subdivisions are social and cultural, linguistic, biological or physical and archaeology. Social and cultural anthropology describe the workings of the society around the world. Linguistic anthropology investigates how language influences our social life. Biological or physical anthropology concerns itself with long-term development of the human organism. Finally, archaeology is concerned with studying past human cultures, and it does this through investigation of physical evidence.

From the above understanding, one can notice that anthropology is really a generalizing and comparative discipline with a concern for understanding human diversity on a global scale. In fact, a hallmark of anthropology is its holistic perspective - understanding humankind in terms of the dynamic interrelationships of all aspects of human existence. In the recent decades, and because anthropologists engage in empirical research with established theories, methods, and analytical techniques, anthropology has become more self-reflexive. Anthropologists actually have been involved with communities and with social conflicts as they increasingly apply their findings to real world social issues and engage their subjects as colleagues and collaborators.

Although it might not always be clear at first sight especially in today’s interdisciplinary environment, anthropology as an empirical discipline, has not only certain limits imposed on it by the topic of the enquiry (human beings), but also certain standard procedures, methods and research policies. Philosophy must therefore be involved in the anthropological debate, as essentialists would have it.

This implies that, there ought to be communication between philosophy and the specialized anthropological disciplines. As such, the universality of philosophical insight becomes therefore the basis for the particularity of empirical experiences. By so doing, philosophy would then bring important insights which are of great value to understanding individual observable phenomena from a broader perspective.

Meanwhile, at this juncture, a concise understanding of linguistic anthropology would therefore be appreciated. Thus, Duranti’s choice of “linguistic

¹⁹ Ibid. P.285

²⁰ Yang, C. (2006). *The Infinite Gift: How Children Learn and Unlearn the Languages of the World*. New York: Scribner, P.4

anthropology over both “anthropological linguistics” and “ethnolinguistics” was part of his conscious attempt at consolidating and redefining the study of language and culture as one of the major subfields of anthropology”.²¹ As such, this view of the field was visibly highlighted by Hymes D, when he defined it as “the study of speech and language within the context of anthropology”.²² Meanwhile, it has to be noted that linguistic anthropology is defined according to Duranti, “as the study of language as a cultural resource and speaking as a cultural practice”.²³

The Formal Methods Of Linguistic Anthropology

As an interdisciplinary field, it relies heavily on and at the same time expands existing methods in some other disciplines, “linguistics” and “anthropology” in particular, with the common goal “of providing an understanding of the various aspects of language as a set of cultural practices, that is, as a system of communication that goes on between individuals and in the same individuals. These serve as representations of the social order and help people use such representations for constitutive social acts”.²⁴

As such, linguistic anthropologists produce works that are based on ethnographically grounded accounts of linguistic structures as used subsequently by real people, in real time and real place. In fact, “they see the subjects of their study, that is , speakers, first and above all as social actors, that is, members of particular, interestingly complex, communities, each organized in a variety of social institutions and through a network of intersecting but not necessarily overlapping sets of expectations, beliefs, and moral values about the world”.²⁵

This consequently implies that, of special interest to them would be to know what speakers and listeners do with language in communication and how it is used socially. Such topics like language learning, language creation, and speech acts may be of specific interest to them. They may even like to know how language relates to the minds of both the speaker and the interpreter and also how language and meaning relate to truth and the world.

Finally, linguistic anthropologists attach a lot of importance to writing practices. They take time to document everything which speakers do as social actors who are involved in a variety of daily activities. These documentations

²¹ Cf. Duranti, A. (1997). Op.cit., P.2

²² Hymes, D. (1963). Objectives and Concepts of Linguistic Anthropology, in D.G. Mandelbaum, G.W. Lasker and E.M. Albert (eds.), *The Teaching of Anthropology*. American Anthropological Association, Memoir 94, P.277

²³ Duranti, A. (1997). Op.cit., P.2

²⁴ Cf. Ibid

²⁵ Duranti, A. (1997). Op.cit., P.3

are furthermore “made accessible first for analysis and later for argumentation through a variety of transcription conventions and new technologies”.²⁶

Object Of Study

The uniqueness of linguistic anthropology lies majorly “in its interest in speakers as social actors, in language as both a resource for and a product of social interaction in speech communities as simultaneously real and imaginary entities whose boundaries are constantly being reshaped and negotiated through myriad acts of speaking”.²⁷

In fact, linguistic anthropology has its object and goal according to Morrison’s inspiring metaphor, “language as the measure of our lives”.²⁸ Consequently, and for Duranti, “this is one of the reasons for which linguistic anthropologists tend to focus on linguistic performance and situated discourse. Rather than exclusively concentrating on what makes us cognitively equal, linguistic anthropologists also focus on how language allows for and creates differentiations- between groups, individuals, identities”.²⁹

Really, language is the most adjustable and most powerful intellectual tool that has been constructed by human beings. It makes effort to reflect on the world, as it reflects upon itself. Language can be used to talk about language. It also allows its speakers to communicate very clearly and distinctly what is being done with words in everyday life otherwise, there would not be any written or spoken account of something that has been observed. More so, this would amount to learning to know and understand what those who take part in the interactions that are studied are up to, what counts as meaningful to them, what they are paying attention to, and for what reasons. In fact, just as Duranti rightly puts it:

Linguistic anthropologists start from the assumption that there are dimensions of speaking that can only be captured by studying what people actually do with language, by matching words, silences, and gestures with the context in which those signs are produced. A consequence of this programmatic position has been the discovery of many ways in which speaking is a social act and as such is subject to the constraints of social action. It has also allowed us to see how speaking produces social action, has consequences for our ways of being in the world, and ultimately for humanity.³⁰

²⁶ Ibid. P.6

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Morrison, T. (1994). *The Noble Lecture in Literature, 1993*. New York: Knopf.

²⁹ Duranti, A. (1997). *Op.cit.*, P.7

³⁰ Ibid. P.9

Purpose Of Study

Language is seen here as a medium of social interaction and since man, a language-using-being is also a social being, it follows therefore that it is only in the society that he can use his language. This idea more so, is further demonstrated by Sapir. E, in the opening paragraph of his article on “language” when he said that, “the gift of speech and a well ordered language are characteristic of every known group of human beings. No tribe has ever been found which is without language, and all statements to the contrary may be dismissed as mere folklore. There seems to be no warrant whatever for the statement which is sometimes made that there are certain people whose vocabulary is so limited that they cannot get on without the supplementary use of gesture so that intelligible communication between members of such a group becomes impossible in the dark. The truth of the matter is that language is an essentially perfect means of expression and communication among every known people. Of all aspects of culture, it is a fair guess that language was the first to receive a highly developed form and that its essential perfection is a prerequisite to the development of culture as a whole”.³¹

From the above quotation, it can be deduced that language has a setting; the people that use it belong to a certain group which is distinguished by physical characteristics from other groups. More so, language does not exist apart from culture. It is just like a social institution, both shaping and being shaped by society at large, or in particular the “cultural niches”³² in which it plays an important role. It is not an “autonomous construct”³³ but social practice both creating and created by the structures and forces of the social institutions within which men live and function. As such, one understands what language is and learns to connect its use with the activities it mediates. This consequently leads us to the next section where we shall discuss the major theoretical areas of concern which have developed within linguistic anthropology in the recent times and which are in constant dialogue with such a development.

³¹ Sapir, E. ([1933] 1963:7). “Language”, *Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*, New York,9: 155-169

³² Armour-Thomas, E. & Goupaul-Nicol, S. (1998). *Assessing Intelligence. Applying a Bio-cultural Model*. USA: Sage Publications, P.92

³³ Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and Power*. London: Longman, P.6

2. Theoretical Concerns In Duranti's Contemporary Linguistic Anthropology

Performance As Actual Use Of Language

Performance as a concept can be understood in many ways. This is true because it draws from a number of sources. Thus, one of such understandings comes from Noam Chomsky, in which, as an essentialist, he made a distinction between linguistic competence and linguistic performance; a distinction which according to Duranti, "was in part inspired by de Saussure's contrast between *langue* and *parole*..., with the first being the system as a whole, independent of particular uses by particular speakers, and the second the language of a particular user of the system".³⁴

As an essentialist, Chomsky distinguishes between competence and performance. Competence is the knowledge of language; it is a kind of a tacit grasp of the structural properties of all the sentences of a language. Performance, on the other hand, involves actual real-time use and may diverge radically from the underlying competence due to environmental disturbances and memory limitations.

Competence enables people to generate all possible grammatical sentences. Performance is the transformation of this competence into everyday speech. Chomsky proposed that linguistic theory should explain the mental processes that underlie the use of language. That is, the subject matter of linguistics will be competence, not performance. He furthermore introduced two technical notions of language: E-language and I-language. 'E' stands for 'extensional' and 'external' and E-language refers to language data or corpus which is external to the mind. 'I' stands for 'individual', 'internal', and 'intentional', and I-language means internalized language – the properties of the mind of individuals who know them.³⁵

More so, Chomsky rejects E-language as undeserving of study and suggests I-language as the only suitable object of study in linguistics. I-languages can and should be studied in isolation from their external environment. In fact, for Chomsky, for H to know L is for H to have a certain I-language. The statements of the grammar are statements of the theory of mind about the I-language, hence structures of the brain formulated at a certain level of abstraction from mechanisms³⁶. Furthermore, he maintains that, "this branch of the study of language... is indeed marked by an absence of any role for community and culture... There is

³⁴ Duranti, A. (1997). Op.cit, P.14

³⁵ Cf. Chomsky, N. (1995). *The Minimalist Programme (Current Studies in Linguistics 28)*. Cambridge, MA: MIT press, Pp 15-16

³⁶ Chomsky, N. (1986). *Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin, and Use*. West Port, CT: Praeger, P.23

nothing of any significance known, at least to me, about community and culture that relates to these questions about the nature of a certain biological system”.³⁷

This conclusion puts Chomsky in a very big problem especially with the non-essentialists, who think that language is a social-functional or external phenomenon. Also, such ordinary language philosophers like H. P. Grice, J. R. Searle and others who were largely influenced by Wittgenstein, postulated their pragmatic theories like implicatures, conversational maxims and speech acts based on the practical use of language.

In fact “there are various views about the nature of language and meaning that can be labelled externalist and Chomsky has been critical about them all”.³⁸ His conviction even pitted him against descriptive linguistics of Leonard Bloomfield and structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure. In short, Chomsky’s internalist view of language faced opposition from such disciplines as: Anthropological Linguistics, Sociology, Political Economy and Philosophy.

Chomsky’s notion of performance as we have tried to expose above is different from the one used by J. L. Austin in his category of performative verbs in which the type of action a particular utterance tries to achieve is made explicit. Thus, in line with the conviction of Austin, as Duranti puts it: “in the utterance *I order you to leave the room...* the verb *order* is not describing what the speaker believes to be true about an independently existing reality. It is instead an attempt to affect reality, by making it conform to the speaker’s wants and expectations. This is an example of the ways in which words do things.”³⁹

As we try to analyse this theory of “words as deeds” in a more sophisticated manner, let us not fail to appreciate Malinowski⁴⁰ in his ‘speech in action’ approach which came on board within the same time. In this approach, he maintains that, to know the language was very essential to accomplish the major goal of ethnography, namely, “to grasp the native’s point of view, his relations to life, to realize his vision of his world.”⁴¹

Also, he went as far as propounding his two major concepts of ethnographic theory of language namely: the notion of **context of situation** and the notion of **language as a mode of action**. Hence, it was of his view that a listener would need “to be informed about the situation in which words were spoken. He would need to have them placed in their proper setting of native culture”.⁴² By so doing

³⁷ Chomsky, N. (2000). *The Architecture of Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, P. 42

³⁸ Bezuidenhout, A. (2006). “Language as Internal,” in Lepore and Smith (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Language*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, P.129

³⁹ Duranti, A. (1997). Op.cit, P.15

⁴⁰ Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) was a Polish-born British anthropologist.

⁴¹ Malinowski, B. (1922). *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. New York: Dutton, P. 25

⁴² Malinowski, B. (1923). “The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages,” in C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards (eds.), *The Meaning of Meaning*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & world Inc, P. 301

and according to Duranti, Malinowski had reached the conclusion that, “the main function of language is not to express thought, not to duplicate mental processes, but rather to play an active pragmatic part in human behaviour”.⁴³

However, despite his grasp of the pragmatic dimensions of language use, it is still observed that Malinowski did not succeed in developing a “conceptual framework for analyzing different functions of speech or different types of relations between utterances and social acts”.⁴⁴ This eventually brings us back to the notion of performance according to J. L. Austin and the origin of the term *performative* can be traced back to Austin’s posthumous *How To Do Things with Words*.

Austin, objecting to the logical positivists’ focus on the verifiability of statements, introduced the performative as a new category of utterance that has no truth value since it does not describe the world, but acts upon it; it is a way of “doing things with words.” In fact, Austin cleverly argues that all utterances are performative, even those that appear merely to describe a state of affairs, since such utterances do the act of informing. This is a revolutionary conclusion, for all utterances must then be viewed as actions, an equation which linguistic anthropologists have of course embraced with joy.

With Austin’s exposition, the broader area of *speech act theory* emerged. According to Durant, Austin went as far as presenting an analytical apparatus to discuss how utterances become social acts. He identified three types of acts that we perform simultaneously when we speak namely: The act of saying something (a locutionary act), the act the speaker can accomplish in saying something by means of the conventional force of the locutionary act (an illocutionary act) and the act produced by the uttering of a particular locution, that is, the consequences or effects of such locution regardless of its conventional force (a perlocutionary act).⁴⁵ In fact, he even went further to introduce what he called performative verbs which when they are used, they perform the very actions that the verbs are supposed to describe. Hence, “every time we perform a locutionary act we also perform an illocutionary act,”⁴⁶ meaning that, at the moment of saying something, we are always doing something.

Finally, even though the *Speech Act Theory of Austin* is an important discovery in this dispensation, it remains confined to a practice of analysis that favours individual speakers, individual utterances, and individual intentions. Such a perspective is vulnerable to criticism based on purely theoretical grounds and on empirical investigation based on cross-cultural comparison.

⁴³ Duranti, A. (1997). Op.cit, P.216

⁴⁴ Ibid. 218

⁴⁵ Cf. Ibid. P.220

⁴⁶ Austin, J.L. (1961). *Philosophical Papers*. London: Oxford University Press, P. 98

The Concept Of Indexicality

Philosophers have several reasons why they are interested in indexicals. In the first instance, some may opt to describe their meanings and fit them into a general semantic theory. For some others, they would want to understand the logic of arguments containing indexicals. Yet, for others too, they would want to think that reflecting on indexicals may help them gain some insights into the nature of belief, self-knowledge, consciousness, first-person perspective, and other serious philosophical matters.

Commenting on indexical expressions, Carnap R, opines that, “as opposed to the symbolic languages of linguistics and to the strictly scientific languages, the common word-languages contain also sentences whose logical character (for example, logical validity or being the logical consequence of another particular sentence, etc.) depends not only upon their syntactical structure, but also upon extra-syntactical circumstances.”⁴⁷

Following from the above comment, indexicality therefore, could be understood as that function by which linguistic and non-linguistic signs point to aspects of context. It is a term that embraces all of the ways communicative acts are situated in relation to spatio-temporal, historical, discursive, social, interactional, and other contexts. It is also an important component of the meaning of signs in use and incidentally “philosophers have long recognized that there are different kinds of signs”.⁴⁸

This is exemplified in Kantian anthropology as Duranti mentions it, in which from a pragmatic point of view, he distinguished between arbitrary and natural signs. While there is no necessary relationship between the shape of a particular letter and the quality of the sound or sounds it stands for, a letter representing a sound can evoke that sound in a reader because a convention has been established and eventually accepted by a community. On the other hand, the smoke alerting or informing us that there is fire is not in any way established by convention, but by the knowledge of a recurrent natural phenomenon. There is therefore a relationship between the sign (smoke) and the phenomenon it stands for (fire). Hence, “if smoke, then fire” and a person seeing smoke can immediately infer that it might come from a nearby fire.⁴⁹

More so, one can say that, the actual smoke could be connected spatio-temporally and physically to another related phenomenon and acquires meaning from that same connection. Paul Grice would call this kind of meaning “natural” and the meaning established by convention, he would call “unnatural.”

⁴⁷ Carnap, R. (1937). *The Logical Syntax of Language*. Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, P.168

⁴⁸ Duranti, A. (1997). Op.cit, P.17

⁴⁹ Cf. Ibid.

This incidentally is characterised by intentionality. From this same angle too, Charles Peirce, an American philosopher, would call the smoke an index and in continuation he would mention that, “a low barometer with a moist air is an index of rain; that is we suppose that the forces of nature establish a probable connection between the low barometer with moist air and coming rain”.⁵⁰

Actually, indexes or indices, as most scholars and researchers would prefer today, are signs that have some kind of existential relation with what they refer or point to. They are a kind of sign defined by a relationship between sign and the referent that is established through experience. Indexical signs are clues, traces, and symptoms of referential objects. To say therefore that, words are indexically related to some object or aspects of the world out there, means to recognize that words carry with them a power that goes beyond the description and identification of people, objects, properties, and events. It means to work at identifying how language becomes a tool through which our social and cultural world is constantly described, evaluated, and reproduced. Here, we can see the strong connection between indexicality and performance, and this would become more visible as we discuss the third notion, participation.

Participation As Speaking, Involving More Than Linguistic Expression

Duranti sees participation as speaking, involving more than linguistic expression. In fact, the notion of participation stresses the inherently social, collective, and distributed quality of any act of speaking. For one to speak a language, he must use sounds that would allow him to participate in interaction with other people. By so doing, he evokes a world that is beyond him, and which in a way, is produced through the ability of words to do things and to point to something beyond such.

We think of an act of communication, linguistic or otherwise, as an act of expressing oneself but we know that communicative success is achieved if the speaker chooses his words in such a way that the hearer will, under the circumstances of utterance, recognize his communicative intention- built occasionally as a sort of thought in action.

Now an utterance is generally more than just an act of communication. When one, for instance, apologizes, one may have the intention not merely to express ones regret but also to seek forgiveness. Seeking forgiveness has to be differentiated from apologizing, even though the one utterance is the performance of an act of both types. As an apology, the utterance is only successful if forgiveness is thereby obtained. Thus, we have to note that an utterance can succeed as an

⁵⁰ Peirce, C. (1940). *Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs*. In J.Buchler (ed.), *Philosophical Writings of Peirce: Selected Writings*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, P.109

act of communication even if the speaker does not possess the attitude he is expressing, since communication is one thing and sincerity is another.

Since communicating involves expressing an attitude which the person may or may not really possess, so that the condition for its success is that the person's audience infer the attitude from the utterance, one can now understand and appreciate why the intention to be performing such an act should have the reflexive character as underscored by Grice. Hence, according to Searle J, "meaning is more than a matter of intention; it is also at least sometimes a matter of convention. One might say that on Grice's account, it would seem that any sentence can be uttered with any meaning whatever, given that the circumstances make possible the appropriate intentions. But that has the consequence that meaning of the sentence then becomes just another circumstance".⁵¹

Furthermore, Searle continues:

Grice's account can be amended to deal with counter-examples of this kind... In our analysis of illocutionary acts, we must capture both the intentional and the conventional aspects and especially the relationship between them. In the performance of an illocutionary act in the literal utterance of a sentence, the speaker intends to produce a certain effect by means of getting the hearer to recognize his intention to produce that effect; and furthermore, if he is using words literally, he intends this recognition to be achieved in virtue of the fact that the rules for using the expressions he utters associate the expression with the production of that effect.⁵²

Communication actually is not a straightforward process of insisting that thoughts are put into words nor is understanding the reverse, but equally straightforward process of decoding those words. Communication is also not essentially a matter of conveying linguistic meanings but of expressing attitudes, and consequently, understanding becomes a matter of recognizing the attitudes being expressed. This is another way of saying that, for communication to have taken place means that, the meaning of a word or symbol must have been grasped and understood by the receiver. In fact, there is nothing as an innocent word because every word, no matter how simple it sounds is loaded with meaning.

⁵¹ Searle, J.R. (1969). *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, P. 45

⁵² Ibid

Conclusion

The discourse on human language as we know remains an interesting enterprise. As such, for some linguists and philosophers, human language is an abstract, symbolic system which humans seem exceptionally able to acquire. Thus, understood in this way, studying language with the exception of its use is subsequently an acceptable and valid enterprise. But looking at language in this way does not actually inform us very much about what people are doing as they generate and comprehend utterances. In fact, language, when it is used, is an action. It is a social action- an action contained within a web of many interpersonal determinants and consequences. It functions as a system which realizes and at the same time describes almost every aspect of human activity in the society. On this background that Duranti eventually developed and defended his thesis on the functionality of language as actualizing man's social nature. However, upon presentation of this thesis, the following observations and conclusions, having discovered the non-resolution of the problem of language and actualization of man's social nature can be considered.

Hence, one would say that generally, Duranti's approach towards issues tends towards *naturalism* and an important repercussion of insisting on naturalist doctrine is that it places a restriction on how philosophical questions or problems can be investigated. As Quine W, explains, to do philosophy naturalistically is to undertake philosophical questions, "from the point of view of our own science, which is the only point of view [on] offer"⁵³. Thus, on the naturalist's definition of philosophy, philosophical analyses are continuous with, or part of science, in a way that they are compelled by its results and judged by its norms. Provided, philosophical questions survive the conversion into naturalism, their answers must be sought in the methods and evidences made available by science.

But, if this is actually naturalism, what would *anti-naturalism* opt for? Anti-naturalism would certainly maintain that the particular relationship between philosophy and science envisioned by the naturalist is excessively restrictive. The reason being that, according to the anti-naturalists' position, there are certainly some methodologies that are not empirical in the sense that they fail to conform to the empirical results and methods of science, but are nonetheless instructive. Thus, to the extent that philosophical analyses have this character, anti-naturalism would not accept that philosophy and science are continuous with one another in any sense that would transform or change philosophy into an empirical discipline.

Furthermore, and to be more specific, one can equally say that, his approach towards the understanding and appreciation of human language which formed

⁵³ Quine, W. (1981). *Theories and Things*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, P.180

the basis for his entire project is an offshoot of analytic-pragmatic tradition; a sort of perspective philosophy. Hence, he presents an analytic-pragmatic theory of language based on both grammatical and ethnographic considerations and analysis of verbal exchanges. As such, his emphasis on specific cultural practices as the object of analysis is on the basis of the assumption that speaking is a form of social organization and thus, it has a constitutive role in the collaborative construction of meaning. "Pragmatics" on the other hand, refers to language conceived of as action, that is, a kind of collaborative social action which is firmly rooted in culture.

The problems associated with Duranti's anthropological approach which focuses on speakers as social actors also are not far-fetched. Many thinkers and philosophers, especially those outside of analytic tradition think that the problems considered by analytic philosophers are too trivial and academic and as such betray the soul of authentic philosophy namely: to answer the basic, ultimate questions of our ordinary life. Some also argue that analytic philosophy so much relies on the methodology of formal logic which ordinarily does not fully capture our understanding of the world that in no way is exhausted by logic.

Considering the influence of pragmatism on Duranti's approach, especially on its insistence on the practical cash value of ideas, or rather insisting that what is true is what works; thinkers have equally argued that such a disposition would actually reduce ideas to mere utility and this would eventually paralyze the cognitive, reflective and imaginative powers.

Meanwhile, at this point, it becomes necessary to observe as a way forward, an approach, coupled with a solution which would rather consider language as part of human rationality through which we actualize our social nature.

Language indeed is part of human rationalization. As such, through this very action of rationalizing, we actualize our social nature. Really, rationality is the power of thinking, but thinking is inseparable from language in the sense that language does in fact influence thought but may not govern it totally. Thus, when a human being learns to think, he is at the same time learning a language through which he learns to think. Man is a language-using-being precisely because he is a rational, thinking being. He is equally a social being because he uses his language in the society.

Language therefore, constitutes in this connection especially, borrowing the technical definition of human being as "Dasein"⁵⁴ according to Martin Heidegger, "Dasein's" mode of being-in-the-world; pointing to the fact that man, a language-

⁵⁴ In this context, "Dasein" is a being-in-the world, understood not merely as an entity inside the world but rather as an entity that relates itself and equally at the same time projects itself into such involvements in the world. For Heidegger, "Dasein" is a constitution of so many ways and means of possibilities that are possible and available in the whole intelligibility of the world. This constitution is as such made possible through language which incidentally he defines as the articulation

using-being is as such, a being-with-others. He is by nature a social being who can neither live nor be conceived in isolation. Language presupposes society as rightly mentioned by Aristotle and Aquinas. It is a human way of existing in the world. It is our way of inhabiting the world. It is at the core of what it is to be human and if this capacity eventually fails us, then our very existence as human beings is jeopardized. In fact, Language is in us as much as we are in it. It actually objectifies the truth of our being.

This proffered solution is in no way final and exhaustive. The topic is very much open for further discussions. Language as an action of human rationality is too interesting to let it slip away.

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of intelligibility. (Cf. Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and Time*, Trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson. New York and Evanston: Harper and Row Publishers, P.204)

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Specyfika antropologii lingwistycznej w myśli Aleksandra Durantiego

Streszczenie

W artykule autor przedstawia charakterystyczne cechy antropologii lingwistycznej rozwijanej przez Aleksandra Durantiego. Problematyka dotyczy tego, jak Duranti rozumie współczesną antropologię lingwistyczną oraz jak postrzega jej zakres i teoretyczne zainteresowanie. W antropologii tej odnajduje nową interpretację bytu ludzkiego, która charakteryzuje się tym, że człowiek definiowany jest z perspektywy funkcjonalności języka, będącego aktualizacją jego społecznej natury. Omawiając propozycję Durantiego, odnotowuje kilka kwestii problematycznych, które poddaje krytycznej analizie głównie w świetle metody metafizyki realistycznej sformułowanej przez przedstawicieli Lubelskiej Szkoły Filozoficznej. Podejście to umożliwiło zaproponowanie roboczego rozwiązania odkrytych trudności, w którym język traktowany jest raczej jako element ludzkiej racjonalności, poprzez którą człowiek realizuje swoją społeczną naturę.

Słowa kluczowe: język, antropologia, człowiek, społeczeństwo, kultura

Summary

This article makes a presentation of the specificity of linguistic anthropology in the thought of Alessandro Duranti. This discussion takes effect within the range of what Durant calls the scope and theoretical concern in contemporary linguistic anthropology. In this discussion however, he presents a new interpretation and definition of human being in the perspective of linguistic anthropology. Thus, man is defined by the functionality of his language, as actualizing his social nature.

An elaboration on Duranti's anthropological proposition which is informed by his approach however, shows some problems. As a way forward, an attempt is made as it becomes necessary to examine his project in the light of the method of realistic metaphysics as cultivated by the Lublin philosophical school. This method or approach provides a working solution which will rather consider language as part of human rationality through which we actualize our social nature.

Keywords: Language, Anthropology, Man, Society, Culture.
