

LINGUISTIC ELEMENTS AS GENERATED AND REFLECTED IN MODERN FRAGMENTED WORLD

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TODOROVA, P.: Linguistic Elements as Generated and Reflected in Modern Fragmented World
FILOZOFIA 69, 2014, No 8, pp. 678-686

Based on research on the production of new linguistic elements, this article explores the ways in which we can trace the role of these new linguistic elements in the development of methodological interactions in the social sciences and humanities. This allows, on one hand, to trace and rethink the modern state of social processes, which are becoming increasingly dynamic due to the fragmentation and non-homogeneity of social formations. On the other hand, it opens possibilities for investigating the potential of language for heuristic transfer of concepts from one theoretical area to another, and for interdisciplinary interaction between knowledge from various disciplines that explore different typological issues. It also enhances new ways of developments of linguistic forms as well as the disciplines, which the latter influence by their creative presence.

Keywords: Linguistic elements – Social sciences and humanities – Dynamic of social processes – Heuristic potential of language

The development of the modern world provokes changes that occur in the sphere of terminology in the social sciences and humanities. When studying the emergence of linguistic forms, it is also possible to observe the social attitudes that produce them and the impact these forms have on the terminology of modern social sciences and humanities, which are seen to be interrelated through intertextual interactions. On this basis, the text traces how the course of social development influences the formation of the terminology and vice versa.

The aim of this text is based on research on the production of linguistic elements and it traces their role in the development of methodological interactions in the social sciences and humanities. This allows, on one hand, to trace and rethink the modern state of social processes, which are becoming increasingly dynamic due to the fragmentation and non-homogeneity of social formations. On the other hand, this opens possibilities for investigating the potential of language for heuristic transfer of concepts from one theoretical area to another, and for interdisciplinary interaction between knowledge from various disciplines, that explore different typological issues. It also enables the renewed development which the linguistic elements undergo and the disciplines which they influence by their creative presence.

The study of linguistic elements in the modern fragmented world raises many questions. Among them for the purposes of this paper, the following stand out:

- 1) How do social groups “verbalize” and “theorize” the linguistic elements?
- 2) What kind of interpretations do the linguistic elements offer for understanding the dynamics of social processes?
- 3) How does the individual create the world around him/herself in verbalizing it, and how does he/she enter into this newly created world based on language which, on one hand, conditions the individual and which, on the other hand, is conditioned by the individual.

In search of answers to such questions, several possible main objectives emerge regarding this study.

In the first place, of course, the study of authors’ works should be situated and more specifically their contributions to problems of the explanatory and heuristic power of language, its social preconditions, and the disciplinary flexibility that it produces.

On this basis, it becomes possible to situate linguistic elements taken from the modern fragmented world in the context of the humanities and social studies. In this way the research could be stimulated by the creative potential of these linguistic elements and the way they contribute to the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary expansion of knowledge. From this perspective, it becomes possible to track the heuristics that is demonstrated in the initial discipline in which these linguistic elements were created and the ways they are developed outside of it.

That could help to trace the involvement of these elements in the transformation of different social formations. Firstly, it could help to identify new challenges in the methodologies of contemporary social and humanities research in a long-term perspective. Secondly, turning to the language studies and precisely to their overall contribution could open the door to bridging disciplines and establish the interdisciplinarity.

Moreover, this makes it possible to track their impact on the processes of social transformation and in the ensuing events.

Such a perspective on linguistic elements places a particular emphasis on understanding the role of the research activity of participants in these processes.

This kind of study brings about several new ideas, which are the focus of this paper.

First, it clarifies the emergence of the substantializations of natural languages in contemporary social formations. After that, the attention is oriented towards the study of the implicit social pressure for its dissemination. The process of research continues with identifying the manifestations that the study acquires in terms of movement and development. Then, the reflexive /non-substantial form/ conceptual apparatus for describing the theoretical contribution of linguistic elements is introduced /see p.6/.

The aim is to reveal the ways in which these linguistic elements interpret the modern fragmented world in its dynamics as well as how they transform the theoretical paradigms and vice versa.

To achieve this goal the following methodological selections are made:

1. For the study of linguistic elements, I will use science studies views on transdisci-

plularity – a general methodological system existing in several disciplines, which is oriented towards solving scientific problems such as problems of structural invariants, interaction in the internal structure of complex systems and the problem of the unification of different projections of objects. This refers to the manifestation of the principle of complementarity, whose solution is a result of simultaneous research in several areas particularly productive in methods and procedures in open systems such as social ones. This will contribute to: 1. Clarification of the explanatory power of linguistic elements in their original use; 2. Study of the extracts and social distribution of these forms; 3) Study of the relationships, in which these linguistic elements are being transformed when transferred to another subject area.

2. For the study of the modern fragmented world, I will use views (from the field of science studies) regarding interdisciplinarity as an approach to redefining the problems of the mutual relationships among disciplines and the interaction among different kinds of knowledge in different disciplines by exploring problem fields that are *typologically* different. Moreover, with regard to the specific research problem of the text, interdisciplinarity allows the opportunity to track the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic aspects of scientific knowledge. This is particularly productive for the clarification of the role of “heterogenesis” in disciplines.

Substantializations of natural language in contemporary fragmented social formations. The need to overcome the static, metaphysical concepts of social sciences is presented by Norbert Elias in his work *What is sociology?* His arguments, however, can be applied to a broader context since many subjects in humanities are plagued by similar problems.

The analysis of the problems arising out of natural language and underlying all theoretical discourses contributes only partially to the understanding of the conceptual difficulties that sociology faces. The author notes that the reason for the complexity of many modern sociological theories lies not in the complexity of the subject area but in the *use of concepts* that are largely established in *other sciences*, especially in the physical science or in the use of everyday concepts, which are considered self-evident and which are inappropriate for the study of specific *functional relationships in society* (Elias 1999, 294)

Thus, forms so obtained seem like descriptions of *characteristics of natural and social world*. This substantializing character of ordinary linguistic elements as language tools and the character of our thinking operations are manifested in the very concept of society. Thus, based on language, we arrive at the substantialized and dehumanized way of thinking, which, on its turn, gives rise to the “metaphysics of social formations”. We encounter that constantly both in the everyday and the theoretical views on society. It is associated with the automatic transfer of linguistic and thinking tools developed in the study of the physicochemical natural processes to the social dependencies among individuals.

Social pressure. As a rule, consenting to the old and familiar ways of thinking and expression never occurs without conflict. In this case, a complete *reorder of perception and thinking* characteristics to *a number of interdependent* people in a given society is needed.

The difficulty in getting rid of the extreme inertia in the language and mental resources as well as the ensuing non-reflexive views on man, society and nature, stems from their social roots. It is true that in the "natural" language some lexical innovations become accepted quite easily and quickly. When, however, there is need for radical changes to be made to the basic language structures that have been established and have followed steady patterns over long periods, these kinds of changes are not easy to happen.

According to Elias, if we try to comprehend the so-called reflecting communication among people, we inevitably encounter the deficiencies of the existing conceptual and terminological model. In an in-depth reflection we can easily find that many of those cognitive tools and concepts in humanities used in the social sciences are closer to the patterns of the naive, pre-scientific, self-centred thinking. Thus, overcoming the traditional cognitive models is hampered by both the traditionalism that exists in the research communities and the *social pressure* associated with the already approved forms in language and thought.

Social tensions and conflicts, however, will not be dealt with by exercising theoretical silence. "These are structural tensions and conflicts. They, and their outcome in many cases, form the core of a particular process of development." (Elias 1999, 20).

Elias notes that the conceptual model or "apparatus" of sociological theories often lack such notions like the types of dependencies and constraints which people as members of society exercise among themselves.

When it is necessary to investigate developmental processes rather than static structures studied by certain natural sciences, linguistic and conceptual innovations become inevitable. Elias remarks that the structure of the language forces us initially to think and express objects as isolated and at rest and then assign them a continuous movement, change or attitude by using appropriate verbs.

Conceptual difficulties that social sciences face are largely due to the influence of the natural sciences refracted by the philosophy of science. At the time when Elias writes his criticism, sociology is dominated by such abstractions which seem oriented towards certain isolated objects at rest. A better social picture, however, can be drawn by the use of notions relevantly describing the ever-changing nature of societies and their members. "Although, on the surface, this contradicts the generally accepted linguistic and thought patterns, it is more reasonable to say that Man is in perpetual motion: he does not just go through a process, he is a process himself". (Elias 1999, 133). In other words: "A man at rest is a myth." (Elias 1999, 136).

Reflexive (non-substantial) conceptual apparatus. Man's perception of himself as a being to which society and other individuals stand opposed is not naturally inherent. Rather, it is culturally formed. Its origin may be associated with the emergence of commercial and financial relations, which has led to the concept of the so-called 'atomized'

society consisting only of externally connected individuals.

In philosophical terms, it is expressed by the Cartesian subject, whose ability for self-reflection releases him from the delusions imposed by traditions, authorities and educational institutions. As a possible outcome out of the reified way of the formation of concepts in social sciences and humanities, Elias offers the system of personal pronouns, which we use in natural language. He likens it to a coordinate system that can be imposed on all societies regardless of how different they are because their standardized symbols are common to all human groups. For the same reason it is also an indicator of the level of integration among their members. Personal pronouns illustrate the “relative autonomy of the societies that people form and the type of communication that is characteristic to them.” (Elias 1999, 139).

The adoption of series of personal pronouns according to Elias does not necessarily eliminate the dangers arising from reified thinking. Yet, through them, the power of tradition is perhaps most clearly revealed and this may make us regard a process as something static without further links to any development.

The system of personal pronouns is indicative of a fundamental commitment each person has with other people. Therefore, orienting researcher’s attention to them serves as a transition from the concept of man as *homo clausus* to *hominess aperti*. (Elias 1999, 141).

Another advantage of the model of personal pronouns is its ability to take into account the perspective nature of human relationships, i.e. the opportunity to view such relationships from one person’s perspective to another and vice versa. Elias observes that even Max Weber explored that idea by focusing his attention on “I” and “We” and subsequently introducing the notion of *perspective* on *social facts*. The problem here is that researchers often do not take into account the differences in various points of view. As a consequence, they arrive at the concept of human relations being frozen, static, and described unilaterally.

As noted by Levi-Strauss, social and linguistic researchers conduct their studies based on absolute symbolism (Kristeva 1974, 70).

For instance, the social philosophy of the German researcher Johannes Heinrichs is an illustration of creating a bridge between social and linguistic theories. Regardless of where we begin our exploration, be it from language as a social phenomenon or from society, researchers have discovered common traits that interconnect the two types of theories and such interconnection is made by and within the actual individual.

Following this train of thought, Heinrichs observes that a person can reflect on himself only dialogically within the structure of the following four elements of - *I*, *You*, *Nature* and *Sense medium* - as a precondition to communication in society. He subdivides social action into:

A) instrumental treatment of the other; B) strategic viewing of the other as indispensable to achieve one’s own goals; C) communicative perception of the expectations and desires of the other; D) perception of meta-communicative requirements and norms (Heinrichs 2004, 7-8).

On this basis, Johannes Heinrichs distinguishes four different levels of social coexis-

tence: 1) attitude of man towards material objects; 2) towards himself as a subject; 3) towards “You” as an opposite otherness, and 4) towards the common link among 1, 2, and 3 which allows people to communicate. These four relations are present everywhere in the human world. One talks to the Other about any Object with the help of Language as a medium.

The substance of culture is communication. The language does not cover all communicative actions. However, it is a medium, which is able to integrate the whole spectrum of specific communicative values, or culture in general. In this sense, art can be considered a meta-language, offering new forms of expression through meta-communication.

The division of ethical virtues according to the person subject of verbal conjugation forms. Paul Ricœur believed that the philosophy of personality could only be successful by conducting dialogue with the philosophy of language since, even though not everything is language, to man all things must lean on language in order to be meaningful. From this viewpoint, the theory of speech acts and the whole of pragmatics can be reformulated on the basis of moral ethos. In that case, *I speak* would correspond to *self-respect* at the *pragmatic level*. From this perspective, the person can *self-designate* him/herself each time by specifying the illocutionary act (the act performed together with speaking) whereby he/she makes a commitment to him/herself. Thus, self-respect is revealed as the ability of the speaker to designate him/herself.

The *subject of utterance* is designated by means of *deictic forms*, which are “the instruments of linguistic activity that confine themselves to ‘showing’ the *singularities* in transcending the generic specificity” (Ricœur 2006, 145). Falling under the category of deictic forms, in addition to *pronouns* and *adverbs*, are the *verbal forms* and attributive descriptions by which a subject designates him/herself. In the sentence “*I say that*”, “*I*” is a self-referential expression whereby the person speaking designates him/herself; and as such, the speaker cannot be substituted in this case (Ricœur 2006, 145).

The significance of interlocutive acts becomes even clearer in the case of relationships exhibited towards the other. The question of *recognition* immediately appears here: addressing another person implies the reverse relation as well, since that other person may in turn take the initiative to ask you something. However, that would not be possible if ‘*I*’ were not capable of designating ‘*myself*’ as the one to whom the speech is addressed. Thus, *self-designation* and *speech* are related to each other in the same way as *self-respect* and *concern*.

Within the *interlocutive context*, what stands out foremost is not only the relationship between *I* and *you* but, also, *language* as an *institution*. In this sense, the connection between language as an institution and discourse as self-expression and speech represents a model of the relation between random institutions (political, economic, juridical, etc.). In this perspective, the linguistic triad of *self-expression*, *speech* and *language as an institution* is very similar to the *triad of ethos*: *self-respect*, *concern*, and *fair institutions*. The connection appears particularly distinct in the case of *the promise*. When I promise some-

thing, I assume the obligation of doing something concrete. In order to keep my word, I must *preserve my identity* as well. This is how my *self-respect* manifests itself.

On the other hand, my promise is always aimed at someone who expects me to *keep my word* or, in other words, there is *mutual recognition* here. Lastly, the promise is related to maintaining trust in the *institution of language*. Otherwise, it would be always possible to say that my given word had a different meaning from what my interlocutor understood it to mean. (Ricœur 1996, 58-60)

Tzvetan Todorov's views are close to those of Ricœur regarding the link between *language* and *morals*. In his book *Facing the Extreme*, a study on human destinies in the totalitarian concentration camps, the author discussed the human virtues, grouping them under three domains: 1. *dignity* – where the Self turns to the *Self* as such; 2. *caring concern* – for one or more *You*, i.e. for individuals with whom a person establishes relations of *mutuality* and *exchange of roles*; 3. *spiritual activity* addressed to *them*, an *anonymous multitude of people* whose members cannot be immediate participants in a current dialogue. Thus, Tzvetan Todorov explains that the virtues can only be three in number, that is, only so many as the *persons acting as subjects of the verbal conjugation* (Todorov 1994, 103).

Todorov's definition is more precise than that of Norbert Elias in the additional emphasis that the former puts on verbal conjugation. "Virtue" signifies "virtuous *action*". There is no such thing as passive, inactive virtuousness. Without this grammatical stress upon the active character of virtuousness, the door opens wide to the substantialization of moral concepts and the capacities they designate.

Thus, Todorov finds a practical application for Ricœur's hermeneutic views. Departing from a philosophical-ethical standpoint, he attains general views on the essence of humanism, and attempts to revive the latter through a new reading of the history of West European thought.

Configuration. One of the most frequently encountered forms of political and media discourse is the speaking on behalf of the "voters", the "ordinary people", or "society", etc. This is essentially a way of speech related to power, imposing a generalized representation (simulacrum) of the object referred to, which is thereby amalgamated into an impersonal human mass.

One of the advantages of the *pronoun* model, according to Elias, is that it enables revealing the *perspectival character* of the networks of dependencies between people. This means that the interweaving relationships can be viewed from the perspective of either one of the two sides involved. Sociology must, at the very least, take into account the perspectives of the first and third person. In this sense, the pronoun model leads us to think of people as always interwoven in certain *configurations*. "The inclusion of every person as someone who can say with regard to himself *I* and with regard to others *You* (sg.), *He/She*, *We*, *You*, *They*, is one of the elementary *universal aspects* of all human *configurations*." (Elias 1999, 144).

„The representation of such a *configuration* is a condition to the representation that

he has of himself as a separate human being as well as the consciousness of his personal identity. This representation is defined in the connection to *We*- and *They*- relations within the individual's group and one's position within social units with reference to which one calls *We* and *They*... *The actual configurations* to which these pronouns refer can change together with the people themselves in the course of life... that those people belonging to such groups refer to themselves as *We* and to others as *They* is something universal. That is, to whom they will refer as *We* at a given moment and who they will call *They* is something that might change" (Elias 1999, 145).

The significance of Elias's concept of "configuration" is becoming increasingly obvious in our time in connection with the shifting boundaries among separate sciences. The traditional *division* into scientific studies of *man* and *people* is rather problematic. The *limitations* this division imposes derive *not* from the *specific nature of the subject* but from the particularities of the scientific *field* per se. "The *split* between a representation of man as such and a different representation of *people* as societies is an intellectual *delusion*." (Elias 1999, 146). This division is harmful both to humanities and to social sciences. "What are designated by two different concepts as 'individual' and 'society' are not two separately existing objects as the contemporary usage of these concepts often suggests, but different, yet indivisible levels of the human universe."

Similar is the view of Claude Lévi-Strauss, presented in Julia Kristeva's book *The Revolution of Poetic Language*. What the French anthropologist meant when affirming the similarity between "structures of kinship and language as a symbolic community" is that the former structures may be attributed to the most developed area of the social sciences, namely, *linguistics* (Kristeva 1974, 70).

The notion of *configuration* introduced by Elias is aimed precisely at overcoming the "socially determined coercion to intellectual *division* and polarization of the *notion of man*" (Elias 1999, 146). From the perspective of "configuration", the concepts of 'individual' and of 'society' cease to be different and almost *antagonistic figures*, studied by separate disciplines such as anthropology and sociology (Elias 1999, 147).

The conceptual division of society into separate spheres, as well as the absolute autonomy of the social sciences, are remnants of the ideologically designated period of economic liberalism. That was the time when the *differentiation of mutual dependencies* outpaced the processes of *integration*. It is precisely through the concepts of *differentiation* and *integration* that it becomes possible to overcome the view of society as consisting of separate, unconnected domains: economy, politics, culture, spirituality, etc. (Elias 1999, 162).

However, the transition from one representation of society, centred on one's own person and the group that a person identifies with, to another in which the *human individual* and one's own *group* are *not the center* is far from easy to make since it requires a specific act of *distancing*. The difficulty here is similar to the discovery that the earth is not the center of the universe, which was met with stubborn resistance (Elias 1999, 177). Analogically, this transition in the sociological idea is the postmodern reaction of rejecting the power of the center.

As long as people are emotionally attached to a certain configuration, the latter's immanent dynamics will remain concealed to them. The *perspective* of this configuration is revealed to them only when they mentally put themselves *at a distance* both from the configuration that they themselves have formed and from the *constraints* that they mutually exercise on one another; they are then able to see the tendency of change (Elias 1999, 191-192). Perhaps that is why R. Riffel did not succeed in achieving the "heuristic potential of the concept of *intellectual configuration*" in such a way as to "map out" the whole mass media culture of French society (Dosse 2007, 126).

The censoring of the new, untypical forms of expression deadens the linguistic and social innovations that could normally serve to develop human variety, specificity, and uniqueness.

Exactly for this reason, studies of language forms are very important because they are generated in the modern world and reflect the diversity and dynamics of the linguistic fragments, which construct and deconstruct the world in eternal motion. Reflections on the problems of linguistic elements could lead to many more global conclusions about the nature of human culture, history, social relationship and personal identity. Analyses of this type can be successfully used as a meta-language to enrich the methodological transfers and communication between social sciences and humanities.

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