The turning of the tide: Rethinking language, mind and world
Stephen J. Cowley*, Dongping Zheng
* School of Psychology, University of Hertfordshire, UK
Department of Second Language Studies, University of Hawaii, USA

First published on: 18 March 2011

To cite this Article Cowley, Stephen J. and Zheng, Dongping(2011) 'The turning of the tide: Rethinking language, mind and world', Journal of Multicultural Discourses, First published on: 18 March 2011 (iFirst)
To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/17447143.2011.554642
URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17447143.2011.554642

Please scroll down for article

Full terms and conditions of use: http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.
REVIEW ARTICLE

The turning of the tide: Rethinking language, mind and world
Stephen J. Cowley\textsuperscript{a}\textsuperscript{*} and Dongping Zheng\textsuperscript{b}

\textsuperscript{a}School of Psychology, University of Hertfordshire, UK; \textsuperscript{b}Department of Second Language Studies, University of Hawaii, USA


知己知彼，百战不殆。《孙子兵法·谋攻》 – 孙武

“If you know both yourself and the enemy, you will win a hundred times in a hundred battles.” (The Art of War: Strategies of Defense) By Sun Wu

1. Introduction

Cognitive and generative linguistics may lie at the high water mark of a tradition. They are the culmination of a train of linguistic thought that arose in ancient Greece when language was reduced to parts that could be analysed as constructions, words, propositions, and/or meanings. Human agents came to be seen as being caused to say things about the world in which they live. The environment was separated from the mind or body which, in this tradition, became the “seat” of language (and language-use). Of course, such theories appear in many guises. For example, while generativists take a Cartesian view that separates a mind/brain from what is external, cognitive linguists often follow Hume in placing a human body in an environment. In spite of their differences, however, the views are united in their individualism.

Rethinking language, mind, and world dialogically (hereafter Rethinking) provides an alternative to all such traditions. By taking an ecological approach, Per Linell provides a platform that offers much to both theorists and language teachers. His general thesis is that dialogue can be used as the basis for reshaping the human sciences. By setting out this goal, Rethinking connects philosophy with empirical studies in the social, cognitive, and behavioural sciences. Traditional focus on discourse, words, and grammar or what we dub \textit{yang} linguistics can now be balanced by their \textit{yin} counterpart.\textsuperscript{1} This is needed, Linell argues, because sense-making prompts dialogue, mind, and selves to arise from social and collective living. As we act, feel, and think dialogically, sociodialogue constrains what we can (and cannot) do.

In terms of Sun Wu’s \textit{Strategies of Defence}, our foe is neither Cartesian nor Humean traditions but, rather, how experience of literacy and silent thinking tempts

\textsuperscript{*}Email: s.j.cowley@herts.ac.uk
us to ascribe minds to individual brains. Given what Linell (2005) calls written language bias, these become stores of determinate items that constitute language-systems. In the yang linguistics tradition, an individual (or mind/brain) is said to “possess” language. The dialogical perspective shows how turning to yin allows us to avoid such metaphors. Rather, the focus turns to a “meta-theoretical framework” (22) in which we acknowledge the never-ending process of human becoming.

1.1 Parties in the dialogue
Dialogue results from the dynamics of interdependence or lives that are permeated by human interaction. Endorsing the logic of Rethinking, we focus on yin. For while Linell creates new space for yang linguistics, the study of parts and relations both “above” and “below” the sentence, his focus is on interaction, mind, and world. In this spirit, we too emphasise how, as the seas of language withdraw, cognitive and sociocultural patterns come to the fore. As the monological tide flows, like Linell, we see transcriptions as no more than the linguistic surface of human life.

In our dialogue with themes from Rethinking, we draw on our own sociocultural resources. In tracing the retreat of monological theory, one author writes as a Chinese woman who reads Rethinking with great respect and interest in what can be learned from such traditions. She is struck by overlaps with the Chinese classic Zhouyi and its use of Daoism (Taosim) and Confucian ideas, the yin-yang philosophies that have shaped Chinese life for more than 5000 years. The second author is an African-born Western man whose view of language and humanity draws on the isiZulu concept of Imbumba which is associated with mashing dry peas (Cowley 2009). Today Imbumba is applied to work, language, and other ways of doing things together or taking part in co-action (see, Wegner & Sparrow 2007), or activity that engages us with other people. As academics, we concur with Gibson (1979) and Timo Järvilehto (1998) who reject “two-system” views that separate organisms from the world. As living beings, our ecology connects events and actions with history, things, and people. While divided on religion and having different disciplinary homes, both of the authors concur that, as we live, we realize values. How, then, do we relate to the writer of Rethinking as a party whose voice we evoke and ventriloquate?

1.2 Rethinking: an intellectual context
In Sweden, Per Linell has achieved some considerable renown. Early in his career, he challenged the generative view that phonological forms have psychological reality (Linell 1979). Later, he traced the error to psychologism based in written language bias (Linell 2005). Not only does literacy present formal “strings” but also, in our sociohistorical setting, these are often assigned to a language faculty in the skull. Having linked individualism with phonologically-enhanced literacy, Per Linell turns to what Hodges (2007) calls “way-finding” (in Linell 2009: 188). Rather than propose an alternative to yang linguistics, he sought to enrich the language sciences. In Swedish terms, his linguistics is nicely lagom: it offers neither too much of this, nor too much of that. This results in yin-yang balance.

Empirical work underpins Rethinking. Having developed a method to quantify initiatory (or projective) and responsive aspects of utterances (Linell, Gustavsson and Juvonen 1988), he turns to social issues. As a sociolinguist, he made interaction
central to studying, for example, how young defendants engaged with older magistrates in Swedish courts (Linell 1991). More recently, he has focused on how persons relate to each other in focus groups (Marková et al. 2008). Rather than advocate a new-fangled theory, Linell turns to transcription-informed studies of social interaction. Avoiding any inflated claims, his bold thinking builds on work by Ivana Marková and colleagues. Given use of phenomenology, Rethinking is more comprehensive than Approaching Dialogue (Linell 1998). Next, we summarise his view of how dialogue shapes human life and, having done so, sketch applications of the work.

2. Chasing what is real

Rethinking presents not only key aspects and elements of dialogistic human sense-making, but also Linell’s own dialogical view. In the tradition of Schutz (1962), he aims to identify what we encounter when we use language and interaction to grasp “reality”. A volume of 482 pages uses empirical and theoretical study based on contrasting interaction with biological and non-living systems. In dealing with the living, action exploits “mediated activities”. Using language, signs, and objects, selves and others collaborate in making sense and meaning. In construing reality, Linell links European ideas of, among others, Merleau-Ponty, Cassirer, Buber, Schütz, Rommetveit, and Marková, to American work by James, Goffman, and Gibson and the Russian influence of Vygotsky and, above all, Mikhail Bakhtin.

The 21 Chapters of Rethinking fall into five Parts. The first introduces dialogical concepts and, in the second and third, he describes social minds and sense-making. Given our interests, this becomes our focus. In Parts 4 and 5, Linell returns to yang linguistics by focusing on what the primacy of praxis implies for language and discourse. While our concern is conceptual, Rethinking uses detailed analyses that allow the reader to evaluate the text. For example, Chapter 15 argues that “meaning potentials” are abstract properties associated with lexical and grammatical resources that, in combination with contextual resources, evoke situated meanings. In substantiating this important claim, the reader is offered many (Swedish) examples.

2.1 Yin linguistics

Linell places dialogical concepts in a world of “sense-making and meanings” (29). Leaving aside questions of biology and physics, he turns to mediated activities. In this scale conversations become a suitable “model and metaphor for human communication and cognition in general” (27). While phenomenal reality is embodied and situated, agents also sensitize to non-local sociocultural constructs. This contrasts with monological work which, given its individualism, is bound to separate the interactional, the social, and the neurobehavioural. In dialogue, situations are primary and, as a result, the flow of events enacts a sociohistorical context. One theme of Rethinking, developed below, is that interaction enacts double dialogicality that links persons with the world and silent or “third-party” phenomena (21). As shown in Section 3.2, communication evokes traditions that connect signs, people, and “objects” in other oriented ways. Far from using a triadic model, Linell uses a communicative diamond. This allows him to develop Bakhtin’s (1991) view that mind arises in responsive understanding. Dialogical selves emerge as bodies encounter each other in a sociohistorical setting: even languages and their parts
function as silent third parties. By drawing on these and other cultural items (e.g. artifacts) sense-making centres “around meaning and values” (24). As in other contemporary work, intentionality is traced to direct, dialogical activity. Not only does Linell reject monocausality and mental representation but he dismisses Universal Grammar, the mental lexicon, a social semiotic or shared knowledge of conventions. By relating position to, above all, Bühler (1934), Schütz (1962), and Love (2004), Rethinking denies that minds (or brains) process language. While verbal products are salient, they are just a dimension of communicative projects which, indisputably, depend on everything that bodies do as language is woven into an array of concurrent activities.

Since mind is not a “possession”, the Second part of Rethinking challenges individualism. Using focus groups, Linell turns to how dialogical selves enact “a thinking and talking society in miniature” (148). As persons, we are “multivoiced” agents who often contradict both others and selves: feeling, thinking, and acting unite intrapersonal, interpersonal, present (or conscious), and sociocultural perspectives. Highlighting the “role of the other”, he follows Bakhtin: “the world is a drama in which characters participate (it is not a duet but a trio)” (89). The play unfolds as Ego and Alter relate to “objects” in the world. However, alongside the object, Linell emphasises that third parties give dialogue double directionality. These contribute to the pragmatic forces that prompt us to act for someone about something: bodies link with each other, physical entities, and collective traditions (including languages). Cognitive powers arise as minds and bodies enact and evaluate circumstances. Indeed, dialogicality permeates even hearing and seeing in a social interworld of meaning. Here Linell cites a thought from Schütz (1962) to which we later return: the interworld arises as sense-makers ascribe meaning to situated events. As Bakhtin (1991) suggests, responsive understanding permits each party to anticipate the other’s doings.

Having used interaction to rethink agency, Linell turns to phenomenology in investigating interaction (Chapter 8) and, in the next chapter, its products. Using transcription-enhanced investigation, situated interpretation is traced to “a sequence that is constructed by subjects who co-construct acts and activities” (156). In striving to avoid reifying social abstractions, Linell ascribes acts and activities to human subjects. In Love’s (2004) terms, there are two orders of language: though we move, speak, and listen continuously, we are inclined to focus on words that are actually spoken. Unbroken activity or dialogue is reduced to turns, or inter-acts. Rather than challenge Conversation Analysis (CA), the reader is reminded about perspectivity and voicedness that are evoked by the silent other. Linell thus extends analysis beyond sequences by using concepts like responsivity, addressivity, and belongingness. On this richer view, acts and inter-acts are inseparable from communicative projects. Indeed, it is precisely because of their vagueness (and irreducibility to types) that they take on the flexibility needed in human way-finding. Without a grasp of projects, we would be confused, unable to go on, caught in the present, and unaware of perspectives. By contrast, using projects, dialogue allows us to transcend situations though knowledge based in genres, multivoicedness, perspectives, and use of activity-types. Dialogical activity is basic: its pre-conceptual, pre-conscious, and pre-verbal aspect is “co-constitutive of thinking” (253). Languaging is more than what is transcribed: its dynamics act as an “ontology for the living” (252).
2.2 Language revisited

While some may dismiss dialogue as E(xternal)-language, it is central to CA, discourse analysis, and pragmatics. Having asserted the primacy of praxis, in Parts 4 and 5, Linell revisits yang linguistics tradition. Stressing heterogeneity, he discusses morphosyntax, lexis, language-machines, and the brain. In his meta-theoretical framework, the verbal aspect of language contributes to a dialogical meshwork that connects bodies in their worlds. The resulting interactivity enables brains to exert control and monitor interaction (351). As in distributed cognition (Hutchins 1995; Kirsh 2005), artifacts are potential affordances that enrich meaning-making. Further, just as objects serve as affordances, the same logic applies to verbal resources. Constructions become “methods to accomplish actions, communicative projects, and to provide meaning and structure” (280). While not based on neural processes, folk views can be “real in their consequences” (Thomas 1928; cited 287).

Though wordings evoke potentials, we grasp utterances in a particular sense. As in usage-grammars, lexis and grammar are “potentials that are part of a dynamic but relatively stable language” (338). Since pragmatics dominates, the “elements and constituent types” of yang linguistics are second-order entities “derived by abstraction” (281). Although one of us views Chapter 13 the most important of Rethinking, in this context, we merely echo one main theme: “Languaging is praxis that draws on situational, trans-situational and situation-transcending resources”. This, we suggest, is a first step towards reviving Linguistics.

Linell notes that perspectivity serves power and that all scholarship monologises. This is because, in developing ideas, one is bound to develop one’s own point of view. This unsettles all perspectives by highlighting a world of aspects. As living beings are active sense-makers, we are also “objects of some kind” (421). Dialogism can neither dismiss nor endorse science but seek a middle way. It is “explicatory rather than explanatory, more geared to understanding than causal explanation” (389). In short, it cannot really exist without science. This can be elucidated with reference to the taiji or the emblem of yin-yang (see Figure 1).

Applied to dialogue, taiji encompasses the thinking pattern associated with a distinct shape and a border that, while immeasurable and untouchable, governs rules and laws. This elegant model links up with praxis such as Traditional Chinese Medicine, evidence of how dynamic yin-yang wisdom has saved lives for 5000 years (Herfel, Rodrigues, and Gao 2007). Having sketched unity, the closing Chapters open up new conversations as, for example, Linell points out that Marková would not extend dialogicality “beyond” phenomenology. Invoking physics and the brain, “phenomena are (must be) adapted or adaptable to dialogical processes” (404). Eschewing relativism, Linell opposes positions such as postmodernism, discourse theory fundamentalism, and rampant situationalism. Emphasising that there are facts, he embraces a notion akin to Chinese ☈ (he, integrity) to introduce Côté’s view that (430) monologism is a complement to dialogism, not just its opposite. It is inclusive, not exclusive.

3. Reflections on dialogicality

In presenting Rethinking, we leave behind monological presentation to introduce how sense and meaning-making touches us as living subjects. Having elaborated how
double dialogicality draws on the silent third, we begin to sketch the heuristic power of Linell’s proposed communicative diamond.

3.1 Double dialogicality revisited

Language is other-oriented in that its results are interindividual and, at once, part of sociodialogue. The lived importance of the sociocultural ensures that people not only influence what we say and think but, equally, prompt us to address others as individuals from interlocking communities. Though we can connect with “tools”, these lack other-orientation. As shown in the diamond model (see Section 3.2), language allows living subjects to draw on interactivity and, perhaps surprisingly, to exploit its potential in even virtual worlds (cf. Zheng Forthcoming). This is because, though dealing with inanimate objects can seem monocausal (e.g. hitting a billiard ball), the doings of living beings are multiply constrained. As we engage, our bodies set off events that evoke silent parties, the past and the possible.

In linguistics and psychology many oppose nature to nurture by, for example, pitting nativism against empiricism (e.g., Sampson 2005; Cowley 2001) or, perhaps, contrasting a Piagetian focus on individual construction with Vygoskyan emphasis on scaffolding. However, in turning to double dialogicality such oppositions become obsolete. This is because the anonymous third “expresses the cultural and social order that has pre-organized the language to a certain degree” (Steffensen 2007: 24). Its silent presence represents “somebody (or something?) with an agency and a mind” (104) who influences what you choose not to say and, just as crucially, “the ways in which you say what you do in fact say” (104). To Asian eyes, this may understate in that to show respect is to adopt the interest of the other. Wordings and
the third party demand that self be subordinated to the whole. In the family, self will tend to disappear and, in wider circles, where we do not understand, we say “that doesn’t make sense”. Whilst this may be a challenge, it can be a way of asking where the other is coming from, or how silent parties matter. In such cases, far from possessing “agency”, the anonymous other is part of virtual reality. Following Hodges (2007), language becomes an action-system that, while using formal patterns, links with how ecological psychologists view the senses (Gibson 1966; Reed 1996): we draw on visual, auditory, proprioceptive, and haptic modes of action. Hearing, gaze, and other senses bring “objects” into dialogue. Further, we hear and see much more than what is said and meant. For Goffman (e.g. 1959) too, matters like social respect and recognition are crucial: without verbalization, we draw on the silent third party. These kinds of “face” markers dominate Chinese culture. We read, for example, 臉/體面 (liantimian, face/body-oriented personal face), 情面 (qingmian, relation-oriented face), and 事件面 (changmian, event-oriented face). The workings of the silent third prompt control of boundary events involving face, movements, and voice. In dialogue, we make displays of dignity, respect, pride, and shame (as in relation-oriented face). Moreover, even when unspoken, face can unite us (as in event-oriented face). Who we are arises as we engage with multiple or collective aspects. In double dialogicality, much depends on how individual agency adapts to local expectations.

3.2 The communicative diamond

Where “mind” is ascribed to an individual, communication must be dyadic (between X and Y) or triadic (as when something is said to someone). However, once double dialogicality is acknowledged, these models become strained. If we are to capture the circumstances of interaction, we must neither lose sight of details nor reify intentions. At times we draw on what is done, its probability, and how this is accomplished, or what Goffman (1959) distinguishes as information given and information given off. While Linell refrains from saying much about the communicative diamond (see Figure 2), it is a valuable heuristic for rethinking language, mind, and world. How does it clarify the pragmatic forces that sustain the co-ordinates labelled Ego, Alter, Object, and Socioculture (the silent third)?

In everyday life, the diamond evokes faithfulness, purity, and true love. In line with this, the top part of the diamond is to be interpreted as introducing the silent third: the social force to which we orient. This complements how Ego and Alter act dyadically as, invoking objects, they engage about the world. The arrows from the apex stress how responsiveness influences a speaker, hearer, their relations, their view of objects, and their interest in the perceived. Conversely, recognition of the silent third echoes a history of sociocultural interactions. When communication is pure, therefore, this results from a metaphorical cutting away that satisfies the eye of the beholder. In nature, the roughness of diamonds can be construed as depending on, not choice of forms, but how living beings adapt. Where successful, we can realize beauty, faithfulness, and honesty. Independently (as Ego and Alter), we enact interdependence (drawing on Object and Socioculture). In short, communication links history or tradition as the arrow of shared directedness prompts us to create (parts of) the future. In contrast to much of cultural psychology (Shweder 1991), we do not separate individuality and collectivity. Rather, we construe the diamond as balancing the humanity of East and West on scales that shift across sociocultural
domains. Though overlooking individual and collective dynamics, Linell would surely agree that assertions of agency balance displays of sociocultural knowledge. Next, therefore, we use the diamond to consider how learners can be helped to develop skills with languaging.

3.3 Selves in interactional reality

Since people exist through others, we can rethink how communication draws on cultural contexts. Instead of imposing a scientific perspective, we can allow pragmatics to be highly variable. Even if at odds with individualist psychology, this is consistent with the traditional African view that we become human only through the humanity of others. This resonates with the philosophy as condensed in the Chinese character, 仁 (ren, benevolence). In an ancient tradition, Confucius used the character to teach that the highest moral rule is that, when two people co-exist, they care for and love each other. Structurally, ren unites two 人 (ren, person) or, in Linell’s terms, balance can be achieved by acting as dialogical selves. Strikingly, those who know the character use it as a silent third-party: it implements Chinese culture.

The dialogical importance of third-parties is crucial to language teaching. For example, it helps us to understand what is missing in task-based models. Given their focus on individuals, the weight tends to fall on achieving goals rather than learning to manage communicative projects. These must be jointly managed if we are to unleash the power of values realizing. Thus, teaching and learning apply not to inner minds but persons. Indeed, it is only as living subjects that we can use texts and other resources as “thinking devices” (Wertsch 1998; cited 134). Since communication uses more than what people say (or “mean”), Linell stresses, “we appropriate language, words, from others” (135). We do this by acting with objects while, together, orienting to silent-parties. The model has already been applied to medical interactions that centre on patient’s needs. Health professionals integrate bodily movements, language (and metaphor), with practical knowledge and use of
equipment (Cowley et al. 2010). Instead of focusing on cognitive search, decision-making depends on how parties realize values. By extension, the diamond heuristic also applies in monological classrooms where learning arises as we enact situations. At times, one must be a knower who displays Ego, at others, respect for Alter dominates. Equally, there are moments dominated by Objects and others that come under the sway of socioculture. On this view reading and writing become interactivity based on how inscriptions evoke understanding (O’Hara et al. 2002).

Twentieth century theory (including, Linell reminds us, Bakhtin) failed to clarify how sociocultural practices shape situated activity. While Communicative Activity Types (CATs) link “theories of interactional order with theories of institutional order” (63), these too detach types and practices from holistic dynamics and networks. We lose sight of how CATs arise as people decide what to do. Advocating what he calls constrained holism (186), Linell uses a corpus to examine historical dynamics: events in one time-slice are used to track behavioural changes. This has implications for both applied research and classroom practice. Not only do tasks become opportunities to realize values but weight is given to how CATs affect communicative projects. Further, turning from “use” of lexicogrammar, he emphasises that “projects need not be consciously planned beforehand” (178). Indeed, “some of them are simply occasioned in interaction and emerge over time as people go along talking” (178). Learners find that each course-of-action “progresses through different phases or moments, such as planning, development, performance and retrospective evaluation” (190). Virtual worlds have much to offer education in that they allow language to be a mode of action through which learners can realize, for example, trust and care (Zheng and Newgarden in review).

The power of the silent-party implies that outcomes can be “praxeological” or related to actual performative actions. Indeed, when traced to dialogical selves, learners cease to be, in the first instance, knowers. Rather, weight falls on languaging, embodiment and, above all, voice. Though derived from hearing others, third silent parties prompt the self to dialogue and action. At times, however, we refrain from speech. For example, Asian students may appear inappropriately shy in American classrooms: they may worry about grammar, being judged, or see learning as the internalization of facts. In such settings, external media can extend one’s dialogical self. This can serve in discovering practices or creating the “virtual others” of argumentative thinking. Indeed, an internal play of perspectives can bring home subjective feelings and volitions: we integrate, contrast, shift, and switch between “I-positions”. These, Linell reminds us, “are of course often borrowed from others; they are “half somebody else’s” (12). This, indeed, helps clarify how the sense of dialogue can be unspoken or in the air. In terms of the diamond, both Ego and Alter attune to the other’s silent-thirds as they orient to objects, relationships, and world. Together, they bring forth ideas that would never have emerged without interaction. In classroom settings, once learners recognise pragmatic forces, talk can be heard as subtle, sarcastic, and carrying connotations. For those learning to live in new cultural settings, grasping a foreign ideology, sociocultural meanings, and local norms and values, etc., is a giant step towards proficiency.

4. Beyond dialogism, dynamics

For Linell, “individuals do not disappear in dialogism. But here the individual is a social being who is interdependent with others, not an autonomous subject or a
Cartesian "cogito'' (47). In tracking this interdependence, rich transcriptions reveal what Schütz (1962) called “first-order reality”. As we engage with others (and selves), pragmatic forces prompt us to enact social being. While insightful, Linell’s model nonetheless overlooks how imbalances affect individual and collective aspects of life. Pursuing this, we find a deeper dialogism in the sociocultural sea. Using the form of the square and the circle, an ancient Chinese concept suggests how self, other, rules, and values “extend our ecology” (Steffensen 2009). While leaving aside the theory of heaven and earth, modern culture uses the characters 方圆 (fangyuan: square and round) to indicate a “distributed self” that enacts rules and formless values. Can the emblem settle problems raised in Rethinking? Can we overcome splits like implicit/explicit, embodied/brain-based, internal/external, East/West, individual/collective, and self/other?

Linell regards dynamics as “an ontology for the living”. These ground dialogue in the pre-conceptual, the pre-conscious, and the pre-verbal (254). Indeed, Linell views the sub-personal as dialogical. Not only is there neural evidence for this (Damasio 1994), but it is consistent with turning from “meaning” to sense-making. Breaking with Schütz (1962), Linell denies that entities identified in transcriptions are basic (or first-order). Rather, order emerges from the dynamics of the voice, face, and body that prompt us to perceive as we do: we rely on embodied variability. Indeed, direct sense-making makes conversation the basis for learning about mediated activities as perception-action systems prompt judgments. When made explicit, conversations link them to sociocultural norms: these extend the ecology by allowing silent-thirds to shape human skills. Interworlds are independent of the processes and products of talk: they arise from unmediated responsivity in, for example, Tønnesson’s (2009) “ontological niche” that allows a pack of wolves to orient similarly to a changing environment. Similarly, Stuart (2010) traces sense making to enkinaesthesia, an affectively driven, fluctuating sense of the other (and the enkinaesthetic response of the other). While, Linell uses the verbal to evoke reality, his hermeneutics link with both Bakhtin’s responsive understanding and a mild realism. By tracing dialogue to an extended ecology, languaging can connect both the living and the non-living. Here we go beyond Linell by tracing even monological projects (e.g. science) to dynamical roots. While controversial, this echoes the logic of Rethinking. It is our hope that, in voicing another perspective, we open up new conversation.

5. Conclusion

Linell has moved far beyond monological and post-Saussurian tradition. The volume is rich in resources for those who are dissatisfied with models of linguistic functions, discourse, and forms. Dialogism shows that the roots of the human sciences lie in languaging or sense-making: it is an idea to think from. Above all, once linked with ecological and distributed thinking, the turn to yin linguistics begins to deflate words. However, rather than dismiss them as mere finery (or epiphenomena), Linell assigns them to the yang linguistics of language. Our sensitivity to verbal constraints, and silent others, are the necessary counterpoint to his view of mind and world. Indeed, what makes Rethinking important is how Linell uses detailed analysis. These ideas
will germinate as human cognition is increasingly seen as embodied, distributed, and ecological.

Linell offers neither a theory nor a one man view but, rather, a perspective. Though double dialogicality permeates human projects, these are part of a heteroglossic and multi-perspectival world. In one sense, this is local or Swedish: Linell talks straight by using evidence to find a middle way. In another sense, he strives to unite Bakhtinian tradition with phenomenology and empirical studies. By linking yang linguistics with yin, his work resonates with African and Asian culture. In promising to reunite linguistics with practice, in Chinese terms, he reconnects rules and values. Once one rejects written language bias, yin views come to the fore. Indeed, without them, yang linguistics lacks explanatory value. Paradoxically, however, linguistic analysis has had a major role in extending the human ecology. From ancient Greece to modern times, the study of verbal has given us ways of saying things, managing face, understanding others, and grasping when to refrain. The individual and the collective entwine within this heterogeneity. Given this move towards fangyuan, Rethinking marks out changes in both the language sciences and other fields that study human beings. It is part of an ontological shift that deflates both Cartesian dualism and Humean causality.

Language bundles individual and collective sense making in dynamics that criss-cross many time-scales. In suggesting a new balance between language, mind, and world, Western sciences edge closer to traditional Eastern wisdom. Using concepts like yin-yang, ren, face, and fangyuan, dialogical approaches bring out collective identity. Pursuing such wisdom, we can invoke 齐易 (Zhouyi) concepts of 和合 (hehe), heterarchical notions of “harmony and integrity”; and 感應 (ganying),13 hierarchical notions of “feel and response” (Zhang 2001). Once both individualism and written language bias are overthrown, yin-yang linguistics can establish a new peace by bringing psychology and language under the concept of 合 (unity) to achieve 和 (harmony). In a distributed sense, the macro level connects monologism and dialogism and, at the micro level, brain, body, and world.

Notes

1. Yin-yang originates from Chinese observation of nature: it describes many opposite, yet correlative natural phenomena, for example, the Sun and Moon, mountains and water, male and female. It offers a philosophical dynamic for examining relations within and between entities. In this article, we apply yang to the dominant monological tradition and yin to the soft assembled domain of dialogism.

2. This alludes to Dummett’s (1996) “The Seas of Language” which identifies language with a theory where knowing the meaning of a sentence draws on a procedure for verifying its propositional form.

3. The idea can be traced back to Gibson (1950) and has been developed by Bert Hodges and his collaborators (e.g. Hodges 2007; Hodges and Baron 1992).

4. The first version of The Written Language Bias in Linguistics was published in 1982.

5. Appeal to an “invisible third party” is referenced to Salgado and Hermans (2005). Linell calls it “pragmatic coordinate ‘we’ or ‘one’ (generic ‘you’), which concerns how ‘we’ or ‘one’ would use the words in the common language”.

7. For Schütz (1962), the second-order allows us to reconstruct first-order practices (Linell 2009: 29). Since Linell is unhappy with this, he invokes Bakhtin’s (1991) responsive understanding, claiming that there are “things in phenomena” (25).

8. Linell 2009 (100–104) mentions: (1) copresent others in peripheral activity roles; (2) remote audiences; (3) virtual participants, figures populating the discourse; (4) artifacts treated as participants; (5) generalized voices and perspectives; and (6) the near omnipresence of “the third”.

9. This view is fully developed in the study of communicative behaviour in non-human species (see Hinde 1979) but, remarkably, rarely discussed in relation to humans.

10. In isiZulu, this is called Ubuntu; related concepts feature in many African languages.

11. For example, a faithful Christian will live many situations and hear inter-acts that test her trust in “the word of God”. If she says to a poor person dressed in rags and half-starved and say, "Good morning, friend! Be clothed in Christ! Be filled with the Holy Spirit!" and walk off without providing so much as a coat or a cup of soup—where does that get you? Isn’t it obvious that God-talk without God-acts is outrageous nonsense?" (James 2:16-17 New Living Translation). The Biblical verse echoes a voice’s three kinds of meaning: perspectival, physically embodied (faith in action) and as signature (the word of God as the voice of God).

12. In traditional terms, while fang represents the earth and rules, yuan represents heaven, smoothness and flexibility. In this way, fang and yuan extend yin and yang as a complete and balanced being and becoming.

13. This dialogical dynamics of feeling and response permit a unified and thoroughly socialised view of perception/action: human projects depend on skills with double dialogicaly.

References


孙 (Sun), 武 (Wu). (The art of War). http://baike.baidu.com/view/17554.htm


张 (Zhang), 洽成 (Qicheng). 2008. 张其成讲读《黄帝内经》: 养生之道。 (Zhang Qicheng on “Huangdi Neijing”). 中国广西科学技术出版社。
