Abstract: The year 2021 saw significant developments in ecolinguistic studies. Valuable theoretical additions to the position, aim, and scope of ecolinguistics have evinced the continuous evolution of the field beyond its provenance in linguistic studies. Publications on extended ecolinguistic methods drawing on various fields of knowledge have signified the field’s ongoing diversification as an increasingly nuanced (sub)discipline. This article reviews the research areas, communities, events, and publications representative of the year 2021 to demonstrate how ecological issues instigate ecolinguistic scholarship and activism and, conversely, how ecolinguistics contributes to understanding ecological issues. By looking back at the state-of-the-art, the review looks into the future and suggests promising trajectories for the unity and diversity of ecolinguistics.

Keywords: ecolinguistics; language and ecology; state-of-the-art

1 Introduction

In 2021, ecolinguistics as a distinct field of study celebrates its 50th birthday – if we regard Einar Haugen’s (1971) seminal work “The Ecology of Language” as its beginning. It is also the same year when humanity struggles with the consequences of the still ongoing worldwide pandemic. The last two years have shown how poorly prepared humanity is to cope with global disasters and how necessary and urgent it is to change our priorities towards ecological integrity and well-being. A prominent sign is the stories, narratives, and communications of the uncertainty and fear and the rapidity and magnitude of social changes, restructuring our individual and collective behavior on a global scale. In responding to the pressing challenges brought by flawed thinking of ecology, the community of ecolinguistics appeared highly aligned than before in their desire to take actions with “social accountability” (Halliday 1990).

This article aims to present a snapshot of the impressive breadth and depth of the ecolinguistic scholarship in the resilient year of 2021, serving as a foundation
for scholars as they develop research to promote the discipline and advocate for the well-being of the ecology. This article cannot pretend to cover all the exciting works produced in the year 2021 exhaustively and may refer to some works more than once for their multiple values. It offers, however, distinctive trends, innovations, events, and joint efforts in the field considered to be generative for new thoughts. “Research areas” features how multidisciplinary works and divergent views discuss the role of language in ecology, highlighting thoughts from two main approaches and their intersections. “Research communities” considers valuable collective contributions to ecolinguistics that work beyond territorial and symbolic boundaries. The “Events” section reports major events that facilitate the field on a large scale, followed by “Publications”, which provides a brief note outlining significant publications released within the past year. The review ends with an envisage for future directions of ecolinguistics.

2 Research situation

2.1 Research areas

This section begins by restating the shared understanding that the field of ecolinguistics has its traces in two major strands/approaches: Haugen’s metaphorical understanding of “language ecology” as “the study of interactions between any given language and its environment” (Haugen 1972: 325), and Halliday’s biological understanding of ecology in the study of language and of the role of language in dealing with environmental problems (Halliday 1990). The acknowledged perception of ecolinguistics is that, in general, it is a field of study that cares about the relationship between language and ecology. Other than these common grounds in ecolinguistics, “different understandings of the aim, nature, mission, and positioning of ecolinguistics” (Huang and Chen 2017: 38) are now taking the field to diversified and sometimes conflicting directions. Similar to previous years, many theoretically innovative and practically worthwhile works in ecolinguistics in 2021 have emerged either within the two established strands or as their intersection and unification. In the context of the sizable body of ecolinguistic literature, this section takes the two oft-referred approaches as the point of departure and moves towards the more unified approaches.

2.1.1 Haugenian approach

Haugenian approach, more popularly as ‘language ecology’, has long received critiques for its metaphorical taking of language in the sociocultural environment,
thus reifying language as an independent and living agent. In recent years, debates
over conceptual problems of ‘language’ and ‘ecology’ intend to drive this approach
into an epistemological undertaking of language as an ecological phenomenon
(Garner 2014), a biological undertaking of language as a biocognitive phenomenon
(Kravchenko 2016), or a naturalized undertaking of language as a symbiotic
phenomenon (Steffensen 2018). The discussion continues as Steffensen and
Cowley (2021) restate their view of languaging in an extended ecology, and
Kravchenko (2021) emphasizes the biological function of language as a cognitive-
semiotic ability especially in an Information Technology-driven era.

Despite these critiques and disagreements, many evidence-based studies on
language-related issues in social, educational, cultural, or even political contexts
have been labeled with ecolinguistics. The leading topics have remained concerns
over language contact and co-existence between major and minor/ethnic lan-
guages in bilingual or multilingual ecology, aiming for actions and changes in two
significant areas: language policies in educational context and language policies
for language diversity. Most of these studies venture into the social and cultural
environment in multiethnic regions like China, Nepal, Thailand, New Guinea,
Zimbabwe, and Russia.

In the educational context, using Kalanga (a Bantu ethnic group in Zimbabwe)
as a case, Maphosa (2021) examines the implementation of minority languages
policies in education and suggests it is affected by the broader linguistic ecological
factors in an interconnected relationship. In a similar vein, Poudel and Baral (2021)
explore foreign language teaching and learning in Nepal; Schwartz and Deeb
(2021) develop an analysis of children’s progress in a second language in a Hebrew-
Arabic-speaking bilingual preschool in Israel; Shelestyuk (2021) assesses language
policies and foreign/second language training in Russia.

In a grander context, based on the use of Hmong and Mandarin in Guizhou,
China, Zhang et al. (2021) study the two languages’ spatio-temporal niche overlap
with the concept of language niche and ecolinguistics, aiming for linguistic di-
versity and cultural sustainability in multilingual communities. Similarly, Vydrina
(2021) studies the semi-receptive language production mode in Fouta-Djallon,
Guinea, as a hybrid type of small-scale multilingual ecology; Doehler (2021) looks
into the current multilingual language ecology in villages in Southern New Guinea
and explores two lexemes of bird names and plant names to infer about the extent
and nature of multilingualism in the past.

These focused and forceful pieces that expand on the knowledge of language
use in some of the world’s remote areas reveal the necessity and urgency in
attending to multilingualism, language diversity, and other issues in complicated
ecological contexts. However, it is undeniable that although these studies claim to
take an ecolinguistic or ecological perspective, they risk taking the term too broad to be incorporated in what belongs to sociolinguistic studies.

### 2.1.2 Hallidayan approach

The year 2021 offered an array of exciting scholarship on the Hallidayan approach, which believes language has a role in dealing with ecological issues. The works in this section address a range of topics, yet they share similar concerns about improving language use to benefit all.

The approach started as an eco-critical (or ecological) perspective on the grammatical system and texts in the broadest sense. Through the years, discourses of various types have been under ecological scrutiny based on concepts and tools from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA), and other methodologies. As scholars readily combine tools from these existing discourse analysis frameworks with other qualitative or quantitative methods in one way or another, few attempts have been made to establish new or revised methods for the sole purpose of ecological discourse analysis.

There was significant progress on the theories and methods of ecological discourse analysis in 2021. The most prominent one is Stibbe’s (2021a) updated version of *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology, and Stories We Live By*, in which he added new analytical tools of narratives (see “Publications”) to the previous package of CDA, appraisal analysis, visual analysis, and others for various kinds of stories. This book has offered huge methodological assets for many discursive studies in the year 2021. Another new approach to discourse analysis in this vein, Harmonious Discourse Analysis (HDA), was proposed by Huang and Zhao (2021) to localize the approach in a Chinese context. HDA bases itself on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL, see Halliday and Matthiessen 2014), has human-orientedness as its general assumption, and takes conscience, proximity, and regulation as its philosophical principles. The analytical framework starts from the context of situation on the micro-level and leads to the investigation of how language intervenes in human thinking and activity on the macro-level. HDA is proposed to add to the ecolinguistic landscape’s diversity and establish a harmonious dialogue between West and East.

Beyond these new frameworks, Couto et al. (2021) update the Ecosystemic Discourse Analysis (EDA) framework by emphasizing its primary concern for life and explaining the natural, mental, and social ecosystems in the integral ecosystem of language. They describe this approach as an ecological discipline that studies language phenomena following ecoideology, the ideology of life. EDA aims to bring new ideas “to the fore of Discourse Analysis for which political, religious and partisan ideologies are not the most important things”, and they
consider it as the only model of “Discourse Analysis within the domain of the ecological view of the world, departing from within ecology, not from without” (Couto et al. 2021: 15). Sharing the same acronym of EDA, He (2021) proposes that Ecological Discourse Analysis (EDA) should be the self-contained umbrella term for any ecological analysis of language in the Hallidayan approach while she summarizes the aim, target, theoretical foundation, and analytical process of EDA. EDA analysis, in her terms, should be firstly built on function-oriented linguistic theories and guided by ecosophies, then take a textual analysis on macro, meso, and micro levels, and finally lead to behavioral proposals.

The existing methods and the new frameworks have sustained a colossal amount of ecological analysis on a wide variety of discourses, some bearing the name of ecolinguistics, some not. Among the scholarship, the representation of nature (Chen et al. 2021), sustainability and recycling (Abbamonte 2021), climate change (Fine and Love-Nichols 2021), animal rights (Hameed 2021), and vegan campaign (Zhdanava et al. 2021) were the hot topics. Textbooks (Faroq and Umar 2021), websites (Fernández-Vázquez 2021), news media (Cheng and He 2021), institutional announcements (Niceforo 2021), literature (Alves 2021), films, and documentaries (Mliless et al. 2021) were the usual target of analysis. Beyond these, emerging interest in discourses of COVID-19 and its ecological values (Misiaszek 2021; Morozova and Pankevych 2021) and genetic engineering and its influence (Dragoescu 2021; Frayne 2021) have yielded fresh perspectives on topics of recent concerns.

These reviewed works strike out in new theoretical and practical directions, demonstrating the immense potential of discourses in construing our knowledge of ecology and the power of ecolinguistics in revealing such potentials. This line of study currently accounts for most work in the ecolinguistic landscape and will certainly maintain the momentum of development in the coming years.

### 2.1.3 Intersection and unification

Beyond the separate advances to the two approaches, there is a gradual acknowledgment of the shared qualities and the intersections between the two, indicating that ecolinguistics is gradually transcending the confusing Haugenian/Hallidayan split. The year 2021 saw a surge of such understanding in the positioning of ecolinguistics.

In explaining ecolinguistics as a transdisciplinary movement, Stibbe (2021b: 74) states that if ecolinguistics “was to become a credible ecological humanities subject like the others, then it needed to take ecology seriously rather than using it as a metaphor to mean ‘outdoors’, ‘environment’ in a general sense, or ‘interaction’”.

He options for starting from language and then exploring its role in “the life-sustaining relationships of humans, other species and the physical environment” (Stibbe 2021b: 84). In this sense, both Haugenian and Hallidayan approaches are heading in the same direction. In ascribing ecolinguistics to applied linguistics, Huang and Li (2021) identify the shared essentials between Haugen’s approach and Halliday’s approach as their research methodologies and contents are all within the framework of linguistics and borrowing concepts or ideas from ecological studies. Therefore, they do not regard the two as separate but instead take them both as problem-oriented and linguistics applied. In taking ecolinguistics to an extended ecology, Steffensen and Cowley (2021) reinforce their view of languaging and liberate language from the imaginary prison of ‘mind’, taking a step towards observing normative features of language while using languaging to bring about bio-ecological effects. Their ideas are also presented as a unified or radical turn of ecolinguistics. These substantial advances in clarifying the scope of ecolinguistics represent a more unified understanding of the conceptualization of language and ecology, even though with different directions. Nevertheless, with this shared hope for more focused and unified development of the field, it can be concluded that ecolinguistics is by no means pure linguistic study but instead incorporates multifaceted resources necessary to language analysis. In addition to this, either being conservative or ambitious, they expect ecolinguistics to bring about changes in the use of language and grander areas of society and ecology.

For such purposes, scholars from multidisciplinary backgrounds can play a significant role in enriching the trans/interdisciplinarity of ecolinguistics and achieving social changes on various levels. With active engagement in ecolinguistics, Finke (2021) is concerned with pastoralist dilemmas in Western Mongolia; Döring and Ratter (2021) involve in environmental management with the research on the nature-society-mixes of the German Wadden Sea; Cook and Ancarno (2021) engage in confronting the ethical and environmental implications of meat-eating. All of these relevant works sustain and inspire ecolinguistic studies to some degree. Another distinctive research from the year 2021 (Copp et al. 2021) exemplifies how extensive linguistic studies can move across disciplinary boundaries and play a part in ‘hard’ sciences. Seventy-six scholars from the field of environment, fisheries, agriculture, marine science, biology, forest, animal ecology, and others got together to develop the Aquatic Species Invasiveness Screening Kit (AS-ISK), a decision-support tool that offers 32 languages to reduce linguistic uncertainty and to enhance communication between scientists, environmental managers, and policy and decision-makers. The research incorporates ecology of languages, aquatic species invasion, risk identification, global management, and policy-making, presenting how disciplines join hands in dealing with environmental issues.
Since the two milestone studies marking the field of ecolinguistics, numerous articles and excellent in-depth volumes have explored relevant topics, gradually gathering up talents from disciplines indispensable to the joint cause and taking this field to the front stage of human concerns. The above scholarship signifies distinctive contributions to such an endeavor.

### 2.2 Research communities

Even though as a young research area, ecolinguistics can be justifiably called a global ideology and activity (Fill and Penz 2018). Among the collective efforts of the ecolinguistic communities, prominent institutions and figures in several countries have contributed significantly to the development of the discipline. This section reviews their newest achievements essential to future movements in this field, including vibrant communities based in China, the UK, Denmark, Brazil, and others and emerging communities in Indonesia and Nigeria.

In Europe, the UK is inarguably the central hub for the field of ecolinguistics in 2021 as the University of Liverpool held the Fifth International Conference on Ecolinguistics (ICE-5, see “Events”). Scholars and activists concerned with language and ecology took this platform to exchange thoughts on actions that can bring changes. Also, in the UK, the Gloucestershire-based ecolinguistic community led by Arran Stibbe continues to bring new vigor to the field through the network International Ecolinguistics Association.1 The online platform of this network provides intellectual connections, journal (*Language & Ecology*) articles, and a free online course of *The Stories We Live By* (Roccia and Iubini-Hampton 2021). In the latest work, Arran Stibbe, the founder of the Association, recalls his personal story of starting as a linguist and ending up as an ecolinguist to bring forward expectations for the transdisciplinary movement in the field (Stibbe 2021b). He considers the transdisciplinary nature of ecolinguistics as “including language, humans, other species and the future of life in some way” and “transcending the limitations of disciplinary concerns to create actual change” (Stibbe 2021b: 84). This remark consolidates and reinforces one of the future directions of ecolinguistics, foreseeing a more diverse community in the field. Another UK-based contribution to the field is a monograph focusing on oral storytelling and its function in inspiring ecologically beneficial action, written by Anthony Nanson (Nanson 2021, see “Publications” below).

The year 2021 also saw a radical turn in ecolinguistics brought forward by the community in Denmark. Sune Vork Steffensen and Stephen Cowley, pioneers of

1 https://www.ecolinguistics-association.org/.
the distributed language movement, move forward with their radical embodied ecolinguistics building on the concept of languaging, a form of sense-saturated whole-body coordination between persons, situations, artifacts, technologies, and so on in the extended human ecology (Steffensen and Cowley 2021). In this sense, they regard language as part of nature, and people coordinate by drawing on bi-ecological experience, thus linking languaging to ecology. The Odense-based ecolinguistic community has a long tradition in driving for a cognitive sustaining of their bio-ecological concerns (Steffensen 2011). By picturing an ‘ensemble’ process orchestrated along a brain-body-world continuum, this line of work dedicates to bringing ecolinguistics closer to the sphere of life sciences.

In Asia, the vibrant Chinese ecolinguistic communities have developed diversified activities and scholarship, exerting a strong influence characterized by the Chinese ecosophies. At South China Agricultural University (led by Huang Guowen) and at Beijing Foreign Studies University (led by He Wei), scholars have committed to building theoretical bases and methodological resources to reveal the role of discourse in describing and concealing or solving ecological problems. Huang Guowen, the leading figure in the community, proposed the approach of Harmonious Discourse Analysis to diversify the study of ecolinguistics by localizing it in a Chinese context (Huang and Zhao 2021), and his team was committed to demonstrating the intervening power of language in society (Zhang et al. 2021). He Wei, another active figure in the field, called for the unified paradigm of Ecological Discourse Analysis (He 2021) and summarized her team’s work on analytical frameworks in the newly published book New Developments of Ecological Discourse Analysis (He et al. 2021, see “Publications”). With theoretical advances, analytical studies tracing sources from rich and diverse Chinese traditional philosophies have been developed, serving the national ecological civilization cause and beyond. In addition to this progress, ecolinguistic events were held annually to gather up scholars or train talents, such as the annual National Symposium on the Strategic Development of Ecolinguistics and the Sixth National Conference on Ecolinguistics (see “Events”).

Another Asian ecolinguistic community presented a high profile in 2021. The survey shows an active but dispersed group of scholars in Indonesia, featuring interest in Haugenian and Hallidayan approaches. Scholars at the University of Sumatera Utara are particularly outstanding in this cause. In 2021, the Indonesian scholars contributed to the field with analyses of flora and fauna discourse (Akmal and Widayati 2021; Daulay et al. 2021; Isti’anah 2021), indigenous ecological semiotics (Prastio et al. 2021; Rida and Rokhman 2021), and indigenous ethnic language ecology (Saputra et al. 2021; Tarigan and Widayati 2021). The work in Indonesia is characteristic of their appreciation and promotion of indigenous
languages and their profound ecological denotation, adding force to the increasingly heterogeneous ecolinguistics.

In South America, the Brazilian systemic ecolinguistic community continues to build the theoretical bases and practical application led by the Brazilian ecolinguist Hildo Honório do Couto. According to their eighth Bulletin of Group of Studies and Research in Ecosystemic Linguistics in the University of Brasília,² Couto and others have been giving courses and advising master and doctoral projects. Early in 2021, Couto published a book on the rural language of Major Porto, a municipality of Patos de Minas, with the ecosystemic linguistic approach (Couto 2021, see “Publications”), carrying forward with his holistic view on the interactions of language in ecology. He also gave a seminar to students from Universidad Mayor de San Simón, Cochabamba (Bolivia) to promote the theory. In his team, a doctoral project (Andrade 2021) was developed to explore the ecology of communicative interactions in consumer relation hearings in the Special Civil Court, located in the Regional Forum of Salvador, interrelating law and language to the theoretical construction of legal ecolinguistics. By adopting the theoretical-methodological assumptions of ethnography and the eco-methodology of ecolinguistics, the work expands on the theories and applications of ecosystemic linguistics.

In Africa, there is an emerging ecolinguistic community in the Nigeria Ecolinguistics Association, where scholars from the University of Lagos, University of Nigeria, Benue State University, Makurdi, and others dedicate themselves to the ecolinguistic endeavor. The association exerts its influence in Nigeria and beyond by holding international conferences and its Nigeria Journal of Ecolinguistics and Environmental Discourse.³ In 2021, the association held the International Conference 2021 (see “Events” below) themed “Language and Politics of Environmental Ethics in the Era of COVID-19 Pandemic” and published two issues of articles, the most prominent one being Alwin Fill’s article “Ecolinguistics as A Science for Peace”. In this article, Fill emphasizes that “we should also consider the languages of other continents, e.g. those of Africa” (Fill 2021: 2), which envisions developments in communities like the one in Nigeria.

In addition to the above influential ecolinguistic communities, individual scholars in a wide range of countries are joining in the language-ecology discussion. In terms of ecological discourse analysis, scholars worldwide have extended their research focus to an immense range of genres. In Egypt, a small group of scholars has developed the ecological analysis of discourses such as textbooks (Hamed 2021), fables (Ibrahim 2021), and religious verses (El-Wakeel 2021). In

---

countries such as Swiss (Hase et al. 2021), Argentina (Forte 2021), Pakistan (Ahmed et al. 2021), and Morocco (Mliless et al. 2021), where ecolinguistics is emerging as a trend, scholars have analyzed animal discourse, news media, and documentaries that bear their national characters. In terms of language ecology analysis, scholars in Singapore (Cavallaro et al. 2021), Russia (Shelestyuk 2021), Bangladesh (Sultana 2021), Germany (Doehler 2021), and others have discussed the multilingual ecology of Chinese, English, Russian, Bangla, Komnzo (a Papuan language), and other ethnic languages.

Such wide-spreading and diversified concerns across the globe on language and ecology are attaining to a future of ecolinguistics as “an intensely international movement, with strong activity across countries in all continents” (Stibbe 2021b: 211). They also signify the great potential of ecolinguistics as a channel for collective actions and as an engine for changes.

2.3 Events

Beyond endeavors from individuals and communities, exchanges of eco-conscious knowledge, ideas, beliefs, feelings, behaviors, wisdom, and even spirits at multifaceted levels are continually nourishing the ecolinguistic cause. This section summarizes major and distinctive events that fall into the above catalog.

The most renowned event in 2021 was the Fifth International Conference on Ecolinguistics (ICE-5) hosted online by the University of Liverpool from April 12th to 14th. Themed “Ecolinguistics in Action: Tackling Real-world Issues”, ICE-5 calls for actions “as if the house is on fire, because it is”, quoting Greta Thunberg, the Swedish environmental activist. Building on previous ICE conferences (held in Denmark and China) where the conceptual and epistemological understanding of ecolinguistics was explored, this conference highlights the necessity of addressing critical environmental issues and bringing about substantial changes with ecolinguistics. Scholars with multidisciplinary wisdom from across five continents of Africa (Mauritius), Asia (China, Japan, Malaysia), America (US, Brazil, Argentina), Europe (UK, Denmark, Italy, France, Austria, Sweden, Finland), and Oceania (Australia) shared critiques over misconceptions or misrepresentations of ecological relations in multifaceted discourses (media report, institutional documents, campaign communications, documentaries, films, interviews, literature), brought about proposals for raising awareness in diverse social spheres (eco-literacy, animal rights, vegetarianism, environmental migration, eco-musical activism) and campaigned for actions among individuals and organizations (governmental or non-governmental ones). The conference also distinguishes itself with new forms of language and social organization, including Question & Answer sessions for
Ecolinguistics book publication, a panel discussion with other relative initiatives (North West Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership, NWCDTP), workshops of body wording live collage, visualization guided meditation, storytelling events, round table discussion, writing activities, and public engagement. The conference also publicizes new books such as *Storytelling and Ecology: Empathy, Enchantment, and Emergence in the Use of Oral Narratives* (Nanson 2021) and *Corpus-Assisted Ecolinguistics* (Poole 2022), which belong to the Bloomsbury Advances in Ecolinguistics book series.4 ICE-5 marks the collaborative efforts internationally in addressing real-world issues with ecolinguistics as the engine, sustained by multidisciplinary knowledge and channeled through diversified conventional or emerging forms.

Across the world, different sizes of conferences/symposiums/seminars bearing names of ecolinguistics or sharing concerns on language and ecology were staged in various countries, bringing together indigenous wisdom to approach ecological issues at home and beyond.

In Italy, from May 4th to 6th, 2021, an international workshop themed “Changing the (Culture) Climate with Ecocriticism and Ecolinguistics” was held by the Department of Humanistic Studies at the University of Ferrara.5 Scholars worldwide exchanged thoughts on climate change fiction and visual culture, eco-poetry, eco-theatre, eco-performativity, eco-identity, ecosomatic approaches, and heritage sustainability. The workshop included scholars from various disciplinary backgrounds, including ecolinguistics, media studies, semiotics, heritage studies, and ecotourism.

In Poland, from June 21st to 22nd, 2021, the International Ecolinguistic Conference 2021 was held online by Łomża State University of Applied Sciences.6 Aiming to become a comfortable academic and intellectual space to go beyond criticisms, oppositions, and confrontations, the conference presents a wide range of topics on language as a life process, ecolinguistic extensions, transdisciplinary routes, divergent paradigms, and other expanded science in the twenty-first century.

In Nigeria, from September 8th to 10th, 2021, the Second International Conference 2021,7 themed “Language and Politics of Environmental Ethics in the Era of COVID-19 Pandemic”, was held online by Nigeria Ecolinguistics Association in collaboration with the International Ecolinguistics Association. The conference

---

explores the ecological discourses and multidisciplinary approaches to environmental sustainability and advocates for environmental ethics and justice, among other pertinent issues. It raised particular concern from officials in the Federal Ministry of Environment and Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria, demonstrating their will to take the cause seriously.

In China, where the first three International Conferences on Ecolinguistics were held, national conferences and training programs were organized. On June 5th, 2021, the 6th National Symposium on the Strategic Development of Ecolinguistics was held in Beijing. The symposium summarizes the work, progress, and achievements of the China Association of Ecolinguistics in 2020 and envisions further development in ecolinguistic talent training, localization, transdisciplinarity, and other fronts. From October 9th to 10th, China Association of Ecolinguistics, in collaboration with the National Research Centre for Foreign Language Education and the National Research Centre for State Language Capacity of Beijing Foreign Studies University and China University of Petroleum (Beijing), held the Sixth National Conference on Ecolinguistics online, with the theme of “Research on Ecolinguistics and Construction of Ecological Civilization”. The conference features ecolinguistic theory development, ecological discourse analysis practices, relevant translation studies, education studies, and language policy studies.

These events reveal innumerable possibilities when ecolinguistic communities decide to bring changes. They all highlight the necessity of collective and collaborative work, cross-cultural and transnational exchange, and envisage the potentials when these efforts are put into dialogue with all concerned parties.

2.4 Publications

This section surveys three scholarly books and some articles from prominent journals, exemplifying what is to be the most significant new directions in ecolinguistic scholarship.

In early 2021, the 2nd edition of Arran Stibbe’s pathbreaking achievement *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By* was published, offering an updated framework with more explicit definitions, more comprehensive frameworks and methodologies, and more diversified materials of the latest interests. The first edition, which is indisputably necessary work, marks a profound breakthrough in ecolinguistics as it proposes linguistic frameworks to analyze language patterns in some major types of stories humans live by Zhang and He (2016). In the new edition, Stibbe redefines ecolinguistics as “the study of the role

---

8 https://ecoling.bfsu.edu.cn/.
of language in the life-sustaining interactions of humans with other species and the physical environment” (Stibbe 2021a: 203) and emphasizes its practical value in building a “more ecological civilization” (Stibbe 2021a: 7). Methodologically, he includes narrative analysis and harmonious discourse analysis within the analytical toolkit. He exemplifies the role of ecolinguistics in solving more intricate ecological issues like COVID-19 based on materials that emerged during the pandemic. Structurally, a new chapter titled “Narrative” is added as “the most complex, important and powerful of all the types of the stories in the book” (Stibbe 2021a: ix). The new edition maintains its accessibility to a wide range of readers with its interdisciplinary nature and simple and understandable language (Ghorbanpour 2021). Moreover, the book has been translated into Indonesian, Chinese, Korean and will soon appear in Arabic, reaching a diversified community of ecolinguistics around the globe.

Like Stibbe (2021a), the following work also contributes to ecolinguistics’ conceptual and methodological repertoire exploring how discourses empower ecological awareness and behavior. While Stibbe (2021a) brings together a toolkit from a series of sources, He Wei, Gao Ran, and Liu Jiahuan’s capacious new work, 生态话语分析新发展研究 (Shengtai Huayu Fenxi Xinfazhan Yanjiu, ‘New Developments of Ecological Discourse Analysis’) (He et al. 2021), elaborates on the enactment of Ecological Discourse Analysis as an independent paradigm of ecolinguistics in response to the divergent references to the term. The work affirms its paradigmatic nature, primary hypothesis, conceptual system, and research method. Ecological Discourse Analysis develops in three steps: 1) analysts specify worldviews, or ecosophy, and build up analytical frameworks based on different linguistic tools; 2) analysts unpack the discourses on the meso-level, the micro-level, and the macro-level to develop a top-down conceptualization of the ecological entities and relations; 3) analysts raise practical suggestions concerning the deployment of linguistic strategies as well as recommendations for more societal awareness, will and competencies. Another highlight of this book is the proposal of the ecosophy “多元和谐，交互共生” (duoyuan hexie, jiaohu gongsheng, ‘Diversity and Interaction, Co-existence and Harmony’). The ecosophy, they explain, “represents the benign working scheme of relationships between nature itself, human and nature, human and human, and various social circles”, “respects the laws of nature”, and “regards human as part of nature” (He et al. 2021: 51). Building upon SFL, especially theories on three meta-functions of language, the rest of the work presents analytical frameworks used to probe the ecological meaning realized by experiential (Chapter 4), interpersonal (Chapter 5), textual (Chapter 6), and logical resources (Chapter 7). Throughout this work, He and her team manage to foreground the power of Ecological Discourse Analysis in revealing ecological patterns with rich materials. In
addition, the in-depth ecological interpretation of Chinese discourses in this work charts critical new directions for ecological analyses of/in non-European languages.

While ecological analysis of stories in the written form has long been hailed as the central agenda of ecolinguistics, concerns of oral narratives have recently been brought to the limelight. In 2021, two monographs played their parts in this cause. One contribution is *A Linguagem Rural da Região de Major Porto, Município de Patos de Minas (MG): Uma Visão Linguístico-Ecossistêmica* (*The Rural Language of the Region of Major Porto, Municipality of Patos de Minas-MG: A Ecosystemic-Linguistics View*) by Hildo Honório do Couto. Written in Portuguese, this nine-chapter monograph (Couto 2021) analyzes the narrative language of the Major Porto community as the result of interpersonal interactions taking place in the context of this territory. Following his Ecosystemic Linguistics, Couto analyzes the essential elements of language (L), people (P), and territory (T) concerning the farm, the people, and the interaction between the people and their land in Major Porto. From Chapters 3 to 6, particular focus is given to the different names of the places, people, and animals to reveal the relationship of contiguity with the natural environment. Through these analyses, Couto presents his ecosystemic linguistic approach towards language from a holistic point of view and enriches the language ecology with the distinctive Brazilian hinterland narratives.

A second contribution to the ecological account of oral narratives is Anthony Nanson’s great work *Storytelling and Ecology: Empathy, Enchantment, and Emergence in the Use of Oral Narratives* (Nanson 2021). The book uncovers the power of the mode of storytelling as a spoken language in facilitating ecological changes. Nanson posits that storytelling has great potential to resist the discourse of powerful vested interests, to make knowledge more accessible, enjoyable and memorable, to establish connections between self and other, to respond to the agency and dynamics of nature with its flexible form, to extend one’s imagination to see the world from perspectives other than one’s own, to nurture a conception of the landscape as sacred and potent with its intrinsic spiritual power. He develops these ideas further by examining a considerable number of oral stories that provide space for conversations (Chapter 2), produce chains of desire and consequence for hope and change through time (Chapter 3), incorporate tradition, legends, enchantment with indigenous wisdom (Chapter 4), open up spaces of transformative consciousness (Chapter 5), and present transcendence of normative expectation (Chapter 6). As a professional storyteller and a pioneering ecocritic of storytelling practice, Nanson shows the need for people to connect, and to connect with the environment through oral narratives of storytelling, pressing beyond the world of text-based research.

Beyond the books that stand out among the scholarship of 2021, some high-profile journals have served as frontiers of ecolinguistic advances. There are
Language & Ecology, Language Sciences, Journal of World Languages, Ecolinguística: Revista Brasileira de Ecologia e Linguagem (ECO-REBEL), and International Journal of Bilingualism, all of which have published articles of significance to the development of the field. The following section provides a snapshot of the journals and their distinctive works in 2021.

Language & Ecology, an online journal affiliated with the International Ecolinguistics Association, has been offering a place for articles on the role of language in the life-sustaining relationships of humans, other species, and the physical environment.9 What makes this journal distinctive is its acceptance of creative works (prose, poems, or artwork) that promote ecological awareness. In 2021, the journal published a mosaic paper of the work of 21 post-graduate students at the University of Udine, Italy, titled “Leaves for Life: Text Analysis for Awareness Raising” (21 Seeds 2021), a collection of eco-poems titled “Through the Green Door: Poems of Place (Mansfield 2021), a film essay shot in Canada titled “The Difference Between a Bird and a Plane (in three episodes)” (Malacart 2021), and a picture book for children titled “Little Red Hat” (Irving 2021).

Language Sciences, a journal featuring transdisciplinary research on linguistic behavior and languaging, has offered a meeting ground for studies taking language and languaging as coordinative, affiliative, and integrational activities enabling human living.10 In 2021, the journal facilitated theoretical and methodological understanding of ecolinguistics with two remarkable articles: Alexander V. Kravchenko’s perception of humans as linguistic organisms and identification of the biological function of language as a cognitive-semiotic ability (Kravchenko 2021) and Huang Guowen and Zhao Ruihua’s proposal of Harmonious Discourse Analysis based on Systemic Functional Linguistics and inspired by traditional Chinese philosophy and contemporary Chinese development trajectories (Huang and Zhao 2021). The journal also published two empirical studies that attend to the ecology of languages. Following an ecological approach, Farsi (2021) explores migrants’ linguistic resources, environment, and emotions on two Assyrian-Iranian migrants in Germany. She finds an immediate mutual effect between language uses, social interactions, and environmental factors. Also through an ecological lens, Taylor and Herik (2021) draw attention to the role of metalinguistic activity in one child’s early language development and then emphasize children’s increasingly skillful and agentive participation in naturally-occurring meta-linguistic exchanges.

9 https://www.ecoling.net/.  
Journal of World Languages, a journal featuring studies on languages’ roles, functions, and structures,\(^\text{11}\) has become a new foreground for ecolinguistics. In 2021, the journal actively promoted theories, methodologies, and empirical studies in ecolinguistics. Among them, Goatly (2021) contributes to the epidemiological understanding of the commonalities between theories of the physical universe and the religious theory and proposes using process-oriented language and employing normalization within English. Another two articles bear significance to ecological discourse analysis: Wei (2021)’s building of an SFL-based interpersonal framework of international ecological discourse that incorporates living and non-living factors and physical and social environments and Lei (2021)’s building of an SFL-based framework to explore how lexicogrammatical resources can be employed strategically in the construction of ecological identity. On the empirical front, there is the multimodal analysis of vegan campaigns (Zhdanava et al. 2021), ecological analysis of the logical resources (Cheng and He 2021), and appraisal resources (Xue and Xu 2021) in news coverage of international issues.

Ecolinguística: Revista Brasileira de Ecologia e Linguagem (ECO-REBEL), a journal based in the University of Brasília and edited by Hildo Honório do Couto, is the major agent for Ecosystemic Linguistics that looks at language as biopsychosocial phenomenon, both exoecologically and endoecologically.\(^\text{12}\) In 2021, three substantial issues on mental, social, and natural interactions between people and the world were published. The pivotal work of “Ecosystemic Discourse Analysis (EDA)” (Couto et al. 2021) in the first issue acted as the keynote of the year’s achievements. Inspired by Deep Ecology, Daoism, and Gandhi’s philosophy of life, Ecosystemic Discourse Analysis is the ecosystemic analysis of discourse that “analyzes, criticizes and prescribes/recommends behaviors that favor life and avoid suffering” (Couto et al. 2021: 10) and approaches the ecology of communicative interaction as a whole.

In addition to the above high-profile journals in ecolinguistics, journals such as Sustainability, Modern Languages in China, CDELT Occasional Papers in the Development of English Education, and Budapest International Research and Critics in Linguistics and Education (BirLE) also provide places for ecolinguistic studies. Another contributor to ecolinguistics, mainly language ecology studies, is the International Journal of Bilingualism, which publishes up-to-date research on the ecology of bilingual and multilingual language uses.

Like those publications discussed in the preceding sections, these journals offer important ways to know ecolinguistics through the contexts that make it


3 Looking forward

The research publications, communities, and events discussed above communicate the breadth and depth of ecolinguistic scholarship in 2021. Along with this, the above review brings to light new directions that could further strengthen ecolinguistics.

The undefined domain and position of the field speak to the first ongoing challenge for scholars to move forward with a shared understanding of the knowledge and norms that might define ecolinguistics. With assets from environmental studies, biological studies, sociocultural studies, cognitive studies, artistic studies, and even religious studies enriching the theoretical and methodological bank, ecolinguistics is destined to become a field of research beyond linguistic boundaries, or a study (science) in its own right as Steffensen and Fill (2014) has previously envisioned. However, this direction does not guarantee immediate consensus on concepts and methods for ecolinguistics. Instead, there is the risk of an ill-defined discipline lacking focus and coherence. Difficulties emerged in summarizing Haugenian works of ‘ecology of language’, ‘language ecology’, and ‘linguistic ecology’ already testified this dilemma. In the coming years, more linguists are expected to join in the debate for clearer and unified understandings of the field in terms of its position, aim, domain and methods.

That said, there is still enormous room for pushing and testifying the boundaries of ecolinguistic theory and methods. Although debates exist over ecolinguistics as part of transdisciplinary linguistics (Stibbe 2021b), applied linguistics (Huang and Li 2021), or a new branch of linguistics (Steffensen and Cowley 2021), there is no doubt that ecolinguistics is multidisciplinary. As ecolinguistics sheds light on the forms, meanings, social, cultural, cognitive, biological, and ecological facets of language and their roles to play in ecology, it demands more innovative frameworks to examine different patterns in language and other modes and to be applied time and time again to see they robustness. These frameworks require trans/multi/interdisciplinary and sometimes ‘undisciplined’ perspectives, which speaks to the second challenge for scholars to move beyond linguistics and venture into the new field of knowledge. The review shows that although promising frameworks have drawn on ecology, economics, environmental science, philosophy, psychology, and even religious studies, the field expects more substantial cross-disciplinary frameworks incorporating specialist knowledge from other disciplines and awaits more empirical studies to test their vitality.
One more area that aspires to diversity is the ecolinguistic communities, which speaks to the third challenge for scholars who are concerned with ecological issues but are under-represented in the field. The field of ecolinguistics represents a collective and global movement that aims for the good of all. However, similar to many other social and humanistic studies, language barriers, cultural differences, and even practical issues of transportation could compromise the participating will of scholars. The loss can be felt more intensely in ecolinguistics since languages, knowledge, traditions, or wisdom of the left-out regions, countries, or cultures may provide for the mainstream but flawed and troubling language use. The example of the emerging Indonesian ecolinguistic studies and African communities represent such a promising trend. In the face of severe ecological issues, diversified ecolinguistic communities across language, culture, and geographical borders can hope to “shape the array of priorities” (Cowley 2021: 422) and provide the optimal solutions.

4 Concluding remarks

As the neoliberal ideology has driven the world towards severe ecological disorder and fails to hold on to its promise of endless growth, it is imperative to recognize that we should redefine the human dimension of work in evolving with, instead of combating the law of nature. The year 2021 has seen how scholars and institutions rise to the occasion in ecolinguistics. We expect to see more collective and cooperative works that foresee promises to unleash the energy and endless possibilities of language in acting ecologically and, in turn, create lasting value for individuals, societies, and the ecology at large. By shifting the way we think about ecology, talk about ecology and act in ecology, ecolinguistics will form a continuous transformation of human’s purpose, meaning, and value from being master to being part of the ecology. This continuation will only be achieved through succeeding years’ work on the unity and diversity of ecolinguistics.

References


