

## **From the ecology of language to the ecological grammar of linguistic communities: A search for the descriptive model in the context to Frisian studies**

*Elżbieta Wąsik (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań)*

The subject matter of this paper constitutes two descriptive models which have been put forward in my studies on Frisian as a minority language. Both proposals have their roots in the ecological way of reasoning borrowed from the naturalist biology and philosophy of evolution and to the sciences of man and language. In the first model, the point of departure was seen in an external description of a language encompassing the properties of its environmental conditionings. A linguistic perspective on the ecological situation of natural languages consisted thus in a survey of the external factors that shaped the life of individuals and communities of language “knowers”, language doers and language speakers and interpreters. In such a context, the descriptive model, which I have utilized as a framework for characterizing the position of Frisian as a language of an ethnic group within the Dutch and German societies, included a number of ecological variables.

What constitutes the core of my second approach to the ecological view of human communication is connected with the placement of language among the other properties of man. Hence, I have departed here from the assumption that the concrete manifestation of language should be traced in observable interpersonal linkages that are created on the basis of how people communicate while realizing their individual and social tasks. In this model, the focus of my attention has been shifted from the grammar of relationships between text-elements of a given language to the grammar of relationships between members of particular linguistic communities that are united by the realization forms and referential values of verbal means of communication. The idea of the ecology of man, which I have put forward against the background of the ecology of language, opposes the view of traditional linguists who have located the lexicon and grammar of a given language within a more complex system at a higher level, the so-called language ecosystem, including language speakers and hearers along with their behaviors and attitudes in environmental settings. In a human-centered view, I have postulated to treat the linguistic properties of communicating individuals who assemble into discursive communities through the realization of shared tasks as constitutive aspects of human ecosystems formed in the natural and socio-cultural domains of their life. In other words, I have assumed that the linguistic properties of people can be observed in their communicative behavior when they mediate between communities and their surroundings in time and space as visible links, and, in consequence, that the grammar of a given language is to be detected in the interpersonal relationships among communication participants in their social reality when the individuals taking part in social interactions refer and interpret the similar meaning bearers in a similar way, being at the same time influenced by changeable external or ecological conditionings. With reference to the topic of the workshop, I will argue that the notion of an ecological grammar of linguistic communities could be applied to the studies of ethnic identity, bearing in mind that the declaration of belonging to a given community can result from mutual interactions between individuals. In view of the fact that the extra-linguistic world is socially constructed, the communicating individuals will be seen as agents who construe their own sense of ethnicity. Respectively, the role of group communication in the creation of a national character of linguistic communities will be exemplified by the particular studies devoted to Frisians and their language.