



UNIVERSITY OF
EASTERN FINLAND

Cognition as *cognition*, cognition as *semiotics*, and the linguist's comfort zone

Tommi Nieminen (University of Eastern Finland)

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Motivation

- 1 There are “functional” explanations of other kind than the cognitive one, and sometimes the non-cognitive explanation is more relevant for the study
→ **“cognition as semiotics”**
- 2 Linguists often use “cognitive” terminology on top of a very traditional linguistic (esp. semantic) analysis which tends to blur the line between functional and non-functional explanations
→ **“linguist’s comfort zone”**

Cognition as cognition

- Cognitively oriented linguistic studies (should) focus on perceptual and processual viewpoints
- “Cognition” as a term of methodology should thus be taken seriously: it should not be used as a general cover term for any functional orientation
- Language is used in cognition, is not totally separate from cognition (“modular”) but neither does it equal cognition
- Although every aspect of a linguistic act needs to be perceived and processed, not every linguistic explanation needs to be cognitive because there are competing ways of perceiving and processing
- Linguistic acts are often best explained by linguistic terms, and this is all right—there’s no need to resort to external factors as a matter of habit

Cognition as semiotics

- When the material is linguistic, one should analyse it linguistically
- Explanations on the semiotic plane do not require a “basis” somewhere else—in the mind or in the society: When all you see is signs, *explain the signs*
- Signs do not require cognition but cognition requires signs (“the idea does not belong to the soul; it is the soul that belongs to the idea”, Peirce, *EP* 2.122)
- Semantics is not inherently cognitive: “the entire meaning and significance of any conception lies in its conceivably practical bearings” (Peirce, *EP* 2.145)
- Encapsulating linguistic terms and linguistic explanations in cognitive jargon does not explain more; it just garbles what is actually seen

Linguist's comfort zone

- Linguistic explanations have a kind of methodological inertia—linguistics is still (“autonomous”) linguistics even if functional explanations have become more common
- ... and *this is all right!*
- Cognitive linguistics is still mostly venerable old linguistics where only the terminology has been “cognititized”
- This is *not* all right because it opens up a gap between the terminology and the actual methodology
- In any case, semiotics is a sphere in itself and there is no need to formulate everything in language with “external” (i. e., functional) terms

Sample case I: Localisation as languaging

- Target: Crowdsourced localisation of a desktop environment
- Involves lots of new (recent neologisms or previously nonexistent) words, concepts, and ways for interacting with the computer
- Methodologically, there is no access to the ways the localisers **perceive** and **process**: all material must be gathered from the source texts, the target texts, and the quite tangible linguistic interchange of ideas between the localisers
- Interchanges occur in email, IRC, forums, comment lines in the localisation files etc.—most (with the exception of email) are public
- Even so, what is seen can be described as active **languaging**: creating language using existing resources in both the source and the target language

Sample case II: Morphological neologism

- Finnish temporal terminative neologisms *siiheksi* : *tuohoksi* : *tähäksi* 'up till X' from *se* 'it', *tuo* 'that', *tämä* 'this' + illative case suffix *-hV(n)* + translative case suffix *-ksi*
- Can be sufficiently explained in semantic terms:
 - illative denotes (among other things) 'the end point of movement': *kylään* 'in(to) the village'
 - translative denotes 'the end state of change': *hyönteiseksi* '[changed into an] insect'
 - translative is also used temporally to denote *terminus ante quem*: *syksyksi* 'at the latest in the autumn'
 - ... and causally: specifically, the translative of *se* 'it' *siksi* denotes 'because of it/that' which is why a distinct **temporal** case form is required in the first place
- functional terms are only required to explain, say, the spreading of the neologism