

33. Verbal and non-verbal communication among human and non-human animals

16058 - The personal rituals in forest of Finnic gatherers

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Arukask, Madis (Tartu Ülikool, Tartu, Estonia / Estland)*

It has been and is still usual for the peoples of North-Western Russia to address certain short verbal formulas to the supernatural inhabitants of forest when entering into it. This way the person announces about his/her arriving and presence to/in the other sphere, also asks help and protection from the spirits for the time period he/she is going to spend in the forest. The forest spirit may appear in different forms – both in human and zoomorphic. Often his length is compared with the height of trees.

The formulaic language serves as a specific code to guarantee the communication. Nevertheless, also the ordinary speech is used with the supernatural agents, for example when the seer engages in a dialogue with the forest spirit when demanding back a domestic animal or person lost into forest. At the same time, not all everyday verbal/vocal acts (like singing, whistling, shouting) have not been permitted in the forest. To keep in between communication when picking berries or mushrooms, people are allowed to use only certain signals (hoots) what I have managed to record from one of my Vepsian informants.

The main topic of this paper is documentations about the behaviour of some Votic and Vepsian informants in the forest in the gathering sessions when the dialogue with certain trees takes place. The person asks something from the tree and leaves something as a gift in exchange. It seems that this is not necessarily a ritual act. The verbal register here often reveals more lyrical and personal attitude. Particular trees can be taken both as a personal partners for conversation and mediators with the supernatural.

16045 - Translative case and animal behaviour among Veps

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Siragusa, Laura (University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, Un. Kingdom / Ver Königr.)*

This paper stems from the work of Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*, and his analysis of the perception of the world and language, in order to disclose further relations between human and non-human animals. In particular, it explores how certain behaviours of the animals are tightly intertwined with specific ways of speaking and local ontologies. Through this language-oriented lens, I also aim to challenge an understanding of domestication as domination. In other words, this paper shows how the human-to-animal vector can be turned around when people's actions are a response of the animals' behaviours. My presentation will be based on field work conducted among Veps in the Republic of Karelia, the Leningrad and Vologda Oblasts since 2009, but also archival material found at ERM in Tartu, and at Kunstkamera and Archives of the Academy of Sciences in Saint-Petersburg. Veps are a Finno-Ugric minority of Russia and traditionally live in rural settlements, surrounded by forests, lakes, rivers, and swamps. Away from the influence of the city and specific ideologies of civilization, Veps have developed a close relation with this rural environment, its human and non-human beings, including animals and spirits. This relation is often reflected on their close observation of what goes around them; indeed, Veps tend to "read" the world and act accordingly. This local ontology encompasses the behaviour of the animals, wild or not-, which the villagers scrupulously keep in check. Depending on what the animals do, people engage in specific activities or not, such as prepare a meal for guests, get ready for foreseeable or unforeseeable weather, and so on. This ontology and response to the animal's behaviour is reflected also in a specific way of speaking among Veps. Veps are bilingual in Russian and Vepsian, their heritage language, and switching between these two codes often reflects the ecology in which Veps find themselves. In the villages, the elderly tend to communicate in Vepsian; whereas, most urban dwellers have embraced Russian as their mother tongue. Some structural and morpho-syntactic characteristics of Vepsian language reflect the long-term relations with this rural environment. An example of this is a Vepsian nominal case, the translative. This case in Vepsian not only indicates a change of state, characteristic also of Finnish and Estonian languages, but also the possibility to foresee and predict what is going to happen. Thus, it lines up with situated and localized ways of dwelling and "reading" this rural environment as well as the behaviour of the animals. Key words: translative case, domestication, Vepsian heritage language, human-animal relations

15988 - "Of course we should talk to them. How else would they learn?": Communicating (domesticated) animals into forest social life

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): Lavi, Noa (*Department of Anthropology, University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel*)

This paper examines relationships between humans and animals among a community of Nayaka, forest dwelling hunter-gatherers in South India. In recent years domesticated animals, provided by welfare agents, became a part of everyday life. On first impression it seems that these animals are treated differently than forest animals: for example, they are depended on humans' protection and feeding and confined in designated areas during the night. Previously, ethnographers concluded that these domesticated animals are treated as things whereas forest animals are treated as persons (Naveh and Bird-David 2014). In this paper, I offer an alternative interpretation to human-domesticated animals relationship, including cases that could be interpreted as maltreatment of animals, by focusing on the ways these are handled or discussed. To do so I study the words and expressions used when talking to and about these animals, about peoples' relations with them, and about each animal's social life.

The people I lived with use the same expressions when describing their relations with fellow Nayaka, domesticated and forest animals and the relations between particular animal-beings. Same lexicons are used to describe respect, sharing and caring for domesticated animals as well as for humans, as part of the ways in which people present themselves as beings of good social abilities. Their lexical choices differ from those of their non-Nayaka neighbors, and this is especially clear when they speak about their domesticated animals in their neighbors' languages and use expressions normally used only for addressing humans, such as pronouns, relational terms and descriptions of actions and reasons. This is perceived as grammatical errors by their neighbors, but is in fact a conscious choice reflecting their views of their domesticated counterparts.

Each animal is characterized by its own actions and relations with others. People formulate opinions about animals by looking at the social ties they are believed to be actively creating and maintaining, their social abilities and personal character. Some individual goats, for instance, require more caring, some are considered rude, others are referred to as "having good social ability and knowledge". All are seen as having potential for developing such abilities. The same expressions used for describing how children learn and develop their relations are also used for the goats.

Differences between domesticated and wild animals are acknowledged, but the difficulties and needs of the domesticated animals do not exclude or classify them as inferior. Rather, these differences manifest the diversity of the social fabric that forms the community. Moreover, it allows people and animals to engage in acts of "caring" and "feeding" that in fact consolidate relations and presents both parties as highly functioning social entities.

15945 - They Say They Have Ears Through the Ground: Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication Between Human and Non-Human Persons in Southwest Alaska

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Fienup-Riordan, Ann (Arctic Studies Center and Calista Education and Culture, Anchorage, USA)*

Animal-human-environmental relations form a critical nexus among hunters and gatherers worldwide. These relations remain especially significant among Yup'ik people in southwest Alaska where subsistence hunting and fishing are everyday activities during which animals are not viewed as resources but as co-inhabitants of a sentient world and as non-human persons who, like the environment, are responsive to human thought, word, and deed. My brief remarks will touch on the many qanruyutet (oral instructions) surrounding the treatment of animals. These include admonitions against speaking without reserve to animals, all of whom hear what we say and, conversely, speaking to animals exhorting their compassion. The availability of animals depends on the care they are given; careless treatment causes animals to disappear. Just as qanruyutet guide relations among humans and between humans and animals, they guide human relations with the world around them. Yup'ik elders speak at length about these qanruyutet to teach their youth not merely the physical features of land and sea but ways in which one's actions elicit reactions in a responsive world. Elders encourage young people to pay attention to qanruyutet, believing that if their values improve, correct actions will follow.

15813 - Talking to and about Animals among Cree People in Northern Alberta, Canada

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Westman, Clint (University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK, Canada / Kanada)*

I present ethnographic data and analysis on speech practices among Cree hunters in semi-isolated communities of northern Alberta, Canada, where I have been conducting research since 1996. I will discuss the following: ritual and symbolic communication with animals; speaking directly to animals in Cree and English; calling animals through imitations of animal calls; talking respectfully about animals; lexical data on animal sex/age categories and body parts. Most of the data I will be discussing I collected in Autumn, 2013 while on a one-week hunting trip with a Cree elder and his extended family. Other data are selected from my discussions and experiences with multiple elders, hunters, language teachers, and community members since 2004. While most of the data are focused on moose (the principal terrestrial food species), I also discuss data regarding other species of birds and mammals. In this discussion I am emphasizing discursive and interpretive, rather than cultural/ecological or ethnoscientific approaches.

A brief discussion of ritual, symbolic, and mythological approaches to contacting and influencing animals will set the ontological stage for a discussion of Cree relations with animals. I then share some of the principles of how to speak to and about animals, based on said ontological principles. I then provide examples of utterances to animals to consider how these utterances reflect some of the ontological principles. Finally, I share some lexical data on moose bodies and life stages, demonstrating the considerable knowledge in which these discursive practices are embedded.

Linguistically, my topic allows for reflection on a wide range of data, including Cree language terminology and modes of address. Given that Cree is a language with a large number of speakers and strong prospects for survival, the opportunity to study its use (as well as use of English, nonverbal communication, and paralinguistic) in this particular sociolinguistic domain is a valuable one. By studying data from speech practices and considering the ecological knowledge and ontological power that underwrites these practices, we can learn more about human-animal relations generally, in particular how people are able to predict, communicate with, predict the actions of, and influence animals in the context of circumpolar societies and hunting societies generally.