In this workshop, we want to explore the relation between language, communication and consciousness. We want to address questions like:

1) To what extent is consciousness semiotic in nature?
2) What types of linguistic influence are there on consciousness and cognition?
3) Are there non-linguistic, even non-semiotic types of consciousness and cognition?
4) What is the influence of communication and dialog on consciousness and cognition?
5) What are the consequences of differences between languages for consciousness and cognition?
6) Do multilingual speakers have a different kind of consciousness from monolingual speakers?
7) Do language and communication throw light on the question of whether language and communication are continuous, gradable rather than categorical phenomena in nature?

The following speakers will participate:
Elisabeth Ahlsén, Jens Allwood, Alexander Almér, Fredrik Stjernberg

A semiotic basis for consciousness
Jens Allwood

This paper/talk explores the idea that cognition is fundamentally semiotic in nature. Using as a point of departure the Peircean trichotomy index, icon and symbol (Peirce 1031-1958), the paper first attempts to distinguish between aspects of consciousness and cognition that are linguistically influenced/dependent and aspects that are not or less so. In a second step, this is then used to give an account of communication as giving rise to degrees of intentionality and awareness. I will also explore the idea that linguistic meaning should be conceived of in terms of perspectival meaning potentials combined with semantic-epistemic-cognitive operations (Allwood 2003, 2008). Thirdly, a proposal is formulated (relying on the aforementioned meaning potentials and semantic-epistemic operations) in which meaning in communication is seem as an interplay between activation of private and shared meaning, which gives us a basis for an understanding of the phenomenon of collective consciousness (cf. Durkheim 1893).
References


Degrees and/or levels of consciousness in communication – evidence from neurolinguistics
Elisabeth Ahlsén, SCCIL Interdisciplinary Center and Division of Communication and Cognition, Department of Applied IT, University of Gothenburg

This talk considers communication in relation to different degrees and/or levels of consciousness in persons with acquired brain damage. Two types of disorders are discussed: (i) aphasia (an acquired language disorder after brain damage) and (ii) apraxia (a disorder affecting the ability to perform movements and actions according to own intentions).

The talk departs from a model of communication and levels/degrees of consciousness presented by Allwood, Kopp, Grammer, Ahlsén et al. (2008) (see also Kopp, Allwood, Ahlsén et al 2008) and seeks to combine this model with a suggested account of aphasia, apraxia in relation to “embodied communication” and the potential role of mirror neurons in communication (Ahlsén 2007, 2008, Allwood, 2008).

An analysis of multimodal naturalistic communication, relating consciousness in the production of words and the production of gestures is used for exemplifying the issues that arise from observations of expressive behavior and the information about the role of consciousness they can provide (cf. Ahlsén 2011, Ahlsén and Schwarz 2013, Ahlsén 2014).
References


**Language and consciousness – Unconscious meanings? Jackendoff’s Unconscious meaning hypothesis revisited**
Fredrik Stjernberg

In several works, Ray Jackendoff (Jackendoff 2007, 2012) has developed a view on the relations between language and consciousness. According to his view, which he called the Unconscious Meaning Hypothesis (2012:90f), the
phenomenological aspect of thinking is the phonological part of the thought, not the thought itself. "[W]e can only be aware of the content of our thoughts if they’re linked with pronunciation." (ibid.) The thought is unconscious. This view is in sharp opposition to most other views of consciousness. Jackendoff lists a couple of theories of consciousness that are incompatible with his view (Jackendoff 2009:88ff), and here we find Baars’ workspace theory, HoT theories, and several others. Since many of these incompatible theories make up a kind of mainstream view of consciousness, it remains an open question what Jackendoff means by consciousness – if almost every other theory of consciousness is discarded by his theory, what makes it a theory of consciousness? My talk will be focussing on a few specific phenomena that are relevant, and perhaps the familiar tip-of-the-tongue phenomenon is best known here. It will be argued that Jackendoff’s view leave it too much of a mystery how thought can have the effects it does have, which means that his views at least have to be revised. There is too little evidence for the supposed workings of a non-conscious level of thought. Contrasting views of Chafe (1994) and Fodor (2008) are discussed.

References


Fodor, J. (2008), LOT2, Oxford, Oxford University Press
