Linguistic concepts are multiscale interactional choice architectures

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This paper begins with Krebs and Dawkins' argument that animal communication is fundamentally about manipulation in social interaction, specifically where one individual's communicative acts are designed to 'manage' another individual by exploiting their patterns of 'assessment', that is, their attentional and cognitive biases. Thought of this way, the content of a linguistic concept is a piece of *choice architecture*. The term comes from the field of applied psychology known as behavioural economics, by which people's psychological propensities are identified and exploited in the design of structure that is aimed at influencing people. (While the terms 'manipulate' and 'influence' refer to the mechanism of exploiting interpreters' biases to achieving certain ends, this must not be understood as inherently or necessarily exploitative in the usually negative sense of that term: the mechanism may equally be put to cooperative or altruistic ends.) In this paper, we explicate this concept in relation to the *semiotic bottleneck* through which all linguistic concepts must pass if they are going to be encoded in a conventional system such as the lexicon of a language. The bottleneck operates within the enchronic temporal-causal frame—the frame in which human interaction unfolds. But the conventionalization of linguistic-conceptual choice architecture is also shaped and constrained by processes in other temporal-causal frames, including the microgenetic, ontogenetic, and diachronic frames. This paper will explicate a conceptual framework for understanding linguistic concepts in these terms. We will distinguish between 'concepts' and 'linguistic concepts': a concept is a piece of mental choice architecture (selected for by psychological processes, primarily in a microgenetic frame), while a *linguistic* concept is a piece of *social* choice architecture (selected for by interactional processes, primarily in an enchronic frame).

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