Identifying with the non-human: modal, zero person and passive constructions with animal reference in Finnish

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The aim of this paper is to discuss the intermediate position of non-human animates on the animacy scale, in terms of viewpoint placement (DeLancey 1981, Lockwood & Macaulay 2012). The paper investigates the conceptualization of animal participants of events in Finnish spoken language data where speakers discuss their nature observations. The focus is on deontic and dynamic modal expressions as well as open reference (zero person, passive) constructions with animal reference. Example (1), concerning the behavior of elks at the moment of giving birth, includes two zero person constructions and the modal verb *kannattaa* ('had better').

(1)   jos **on** kaks vasaa niin eikö todellakin **kannattas** synnyttää ne pikkase edes eri kohtaa (13062012)

'if **Ø has** two calves then wouldn't it actually **be in Ø's interest** to deliver them in places that are at least a bit distant from each other'

These constructions entail the presence of a conscious agent and the ability of the speaker to identify with the position of the agent, which is why they have been considered as reserved to human reference (e. g. Shore 1988, Blevins 2003).

The data include 156 modal and 106 open reference constructions with animal reference. They were culled by examining the conversations in three broadcasts of the radio program *Luontoilta* ('nature night') where listeners call in to ask a council of wildlife experts questions arising from their nature observations.

The paper shows that, as the speakers seek to make sense of the animal experience, they construe the situation subjectively even when it is not, as such, typical of humans. This is particularly the case when animal referents are viewed as selecting the most favorable outcome, in a given situation (see ex. 1). The use of the modal and open reference constructions in the *Luontoilta* data reveals that the speakers recognize and share certain aspects of the physical, cognitive and intersubjective experience of the animal, even though their questions are motivated by the otherness of the animal (see Kozin 2008). The contexts of subjective conceptualization (e. g. Langacker 1999, Laitinen 2006) are contrasted with sequences where speakers report their visual or auditory observations or refer to scientific knowledge.

The animal referents of modal and open reference constructions display a high degree of the so-called inferred animacy, involving "mostly mental aspects of animacy deriving from life concept proper, including sentiency and the attribution of empathy, etc." (Yamamoto 1999, 2006). They rank high on Dahl's (2008) three-step cognitive scale (self – other animate individuals – inanimate objects) where different animate beings are not arranged according to a fixed preexisting order (e. g. domestic – wild, higher – lower animals), which corresponds to a certain culturally determined view of the environment and human's position in it, but by using the self, i. e. the human experience, as a model for making sense of other animate individuals. They are potential objects of egophoric reference, covering reference to the speech act participants as well as generic and logophoric reference, as opposed to allophoric reference, involving non-generic 3rd person, in other words, "all others" (Dahl 2000).

Borrowing the terms from studies on animal consciousness (Allen & Trestman 2015), one can state that, on the basis of the grammatical constructions used, the speakers of *Luontoilta* data attribute animals with phenomenal and access consciousness.