

Learning and knowing as semiosis: Extending the conceptual apparatus of semiotics

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Abstract. If all knowing comes from semiosis, more concepts should be added to the semiotic toolbox. However, semiotic concepts must be defined via other semiotic concepts. We observe an opportunity to advance the state-of-the-art in semiotics by defining concepts of cognitive processes and phenomena via semiotic terms. In particular, we focus on concepts of relevance for theory of knowledge, such as learning, knowing, affordance, scaffolding, resources, competence, memory, and a few others. For these, we provide preliminary definitions from a semiotic perspective, which also explicates their interrelatedness. Redefining these terms this way helps to avoid both physicalism and psychologism, showcasing the epistemological dimensions of environmental situatedness through the semiotic understanding of organisms' fittedness with their environments. Following our review and presentation of each concept, we briefly discuss the significance of our embedded redefinitions in contributing to a semiotic theory of knowing that has relevance to both the humanities and the life sciences, while not forgetting their relevance to education and psychology, but also social semiotic and multimodality studies.

Keywords: affordance; competence; scaffolding; semiotic learning; semiotic resource; theory of knowledge; memory; umwelt

The theoretical strength and useful applicability of semiotics is largely dependent on the adequacy and richness of its conceptual apparatus. The greater part of the semiotic toolbox comes from a few classic authors, with considerable enrichment and diversification occurring between the 1960s and 1980s. The decades after that

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