

Review

Internal
Computation/Mental
Grammar

Nativism

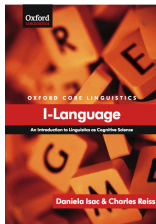
The challenge
for nativists

Constructivism

I-language More Fundamentals

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Three fundamental arguments (Jackendoff 1994)

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- **Internalism and Generativity:** The argument for **Mental Grammar:** The nature of language tells us that our minds contain knowledge of an abstract system of rules that allows us to *generate*, that is, produce and understand, language. This type of system is called a *grammar*.
- **Nativism:** The argument for **Innate Knowledge:** Some aspects of our Mental Grammars are not learned, but are rather innate (we are born with them). This innate knowledge is sometimes called *Universal Grammar*.
- **Constructivism:** The argument for the **Construction of Experience:** Our experience of the world is (partially?) dependent upon what our minds bring to perception; we do not experience the physical world directly, as we will soon see.

Three fundamental arguments (Jackendoff 1994)

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Internalism and Nativism are distinct!

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Mental Grammar = UG + Experience

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The three fundamental arguments applied to language

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The two parts of the Argument for Mental Grammar

- **Mental:** This term highlights the view that we are studying knowledge states. It can be equated with Internalism
- **Grammar:** This knowledge consists of rules and principles, not just lists of utterances. This term reflects the generative, productive property of language.

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Fundamental argument 1: Internalism

The object of study of linguistics is what is in the mind (**mental grammars**), and not what is 'out in the world' (grammar books, conventions). This leads us to the surprising conclusion that as far as linguists are concerned English, French, Cree don't exist!

Components of the language faculty

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- (Phonetics—articulation and perception of speech sounds.)
- Phonology—the patterns and relationships among speech sounds, syllable structure, intonation, *etc.*
- Morphology—the structure of words: prefixes, suffixes, compounding.
- Syntax—sentence structure, word order, agreement (subject-verb, object-verb, noun-adjective).
- Semantics—interpretation and some kinds of meaning.

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Fundamental argument 1: Internalism

Papago reduplication

bana	baabana	<i>coyote/coyotes</i>
tini	tiitini	<i>mouth/mouths</i>
kuna	kuukuna	<i>husband/husbands</i>

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What's the rule?

SG	PL	
nofo	nonofo	'sit'
moe	momoe	'sleep'
alofa	alolofa	'love'
savali	savavali	'walk'
malii	malilii	'die'

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Fundamental argument 1: Internalism

Hungarian suffixes on verbs:

Verb	<i>I V an X</i>	<i>I V the X</i>	<i>I V you</i>
<i>send</i>	küldök	küldöm	küldelek
<i>watch</i>	lesek	lesem	leslek
<i>await</i>	várok	várom	várlak

These Hungarian forms show the effects of vowel harmony, a PHONOLOGICAL process.

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Fundamental argument 2: Nativism

Some aspects of our mental grammar are innate. The innate aspects of our grammar may require interaction with the environment to appear and develop, but they are somehow encoded in the genes. There is *some* initial state that the child is in before learning takes place.

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Fundamental argument 2: Nativism

This innate knowledge is sometimes called *Universal Grammar*

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Internalism and Nativism are distinct!

Mental Grammar = UG + Experience

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Case in Dyirbal

English	Dyirbal	gloss
she saw <i>him</i>	<i>ɲuma yabungu</i> buran	' mother saw father'
<i>she</i> returned	yabu banagan ^y u	'mother returned'
<i>he</i> saw her	yabu <i>ɲumangu</i> buran	' father saw mother'

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Languages may express concepts in different ways (pronoun versus verb marker, separate word vs. prefix), but there does not seem to be any concept that can not be expressed given the means available.

Morphology vs. syntax

Mohawk	English
tashará:tat	Lift it up here!
ia'shará:tat	Lift it up there!

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Fundamental argument 3: Constructivism

we construct word boundaries, syntactic representations, ranges of meaning, etc.

Fundamental argument 3: Constructivism

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Morphological ambiguity

un-tie-able

- *[[un-tie]-able]*: ‘able to be untied’ The knot *is* untiable. I untied it in just five minutes.
- *[un-[tie-able]]*: ‘not able to be tied’
The knot is definitely untiable. I’ve been trying to tie it for 20 years.

Fundamental argument 3: Constructivism

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Syntactic ambiguity

- She fed her dog biscuits.
- She fed [her dog] [biscuits].
 - She fed biscuits to her dog
- She fed [her] [dog biscuits].
 - She fed biscuits for a dog to her.

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English	French
sheep	mouton
mutton	mouton

Fundamental argument 3: Constructivism

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Kinds and generics

- *Dogs* are everywhere/widespread.
- *Dutchmen* are good sailors.

Fundamental argument 3: Constructivism

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The psychological reality of phonemes. E. Sapir 1949

2 homophonous forms in Sarcee, an Athabaskan language of Alberta

- *dínì* this one
- *dínì* it makes a sound

Fundamental argument 3: Constructivism

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The psychological reality of phonemes. E. Sapir 1949

Informants report that the two words do not sound alike. When asked why, the informants indicated that the *n* of 'it makes a sound ended in a *t*. However, when they tested over and over to themselves, the informants had to admit that they could neither hear a *t*, nor feel their tongue articulating one.

Fundamental argument 3: Constructivism

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The psychological reality of phonemes. E. Sapir 1949

- $dínì + i \rightarrow dínì$ this one
- $dínì + i \rightarrow dínìtì$ it makes a sound

There's a phonological rule that deletes t word finally. The t surfaces otherwise.

Fundamental argument 3: Constructivism

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The psychological reality of phonemes. E. Sapir 1949

“The naive speaker and hearer actualize and are sensitive to sounds, but what they feel themselves to be pronouncing and hearing are phonemes, i.e. abstract, constructed symbolic sounds”

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Inclusive vs. Exclusive 1st PL

Mohawk	English		Tok Pisin
iakenihíá:tons	we write	1, DU, EXC	mitupela raitim
iakwahíá:tons	"	1, PL, EXC	mipela raitim
tenihíá:tons	"	1, DU, INC	yumi(-tupela) raitim
tewahíá:tons	"	1, PL, INC	yumipela raitim

Fundamental argument 3: Constructivism

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tenihíá:tons	"	1, DU, INC	yumi(-tupela) raitim
tewahiá:tons	"	1, PL, INC	yumipela raitim

Fundamental argument 3: Constructivism

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Computation/Mental
Grammar

Nativism

The challenge
for nativists

Constructivism

Inclusive vs. Exclusive 1st PL

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