

Essentialists

Noam Chomsky / Generative Grammar

→ Primary subject matter: **Abstract universal principles that explain the properties of specific languages**

→ The essence of our language is **innate**

→ The basis of language is **universal**

→ Semantics and pragmatics are **not** a part of the study of language (Chomsky)

→ **Descriptive** grammar with a penchant for judgment elicitation and intuition

→ Goal: **An internalized generative device that characterizes an infinite set of expressions**

Emergentists

Edward Sapir

→ "Language is primarily a cultural or social product."

→ Primary subject matter: **Linguistic communication, cognition, variation and change**

→ Cognitive, cultural, historical and evolutionary explanations of linguistic phenomena

→ Children's language as a series of stages in an ontogenetic process of developing adult competence

→ Goal: **A mainly conventional and culturally transmitted system for linguistic communication**

Externalists

Leonard Bloomfield / "structuralists"

→ Primary subject matter: **Language use: structural properties of expressions and languages**

→ Use of corpora

→ Descriptions of expression structures and interrelations

→ **Prediction** of properties

→ **Patterns** inferable from accessible features of language use

→ Goal: **A grasp of the distributional properties of a language**

I-Language

Individual: strictly a property of individual human beings, not groups or communities.

Internal: meaning is internal and a language is a state your mind/brain is in.

Intentional: a language is a specific procedure, generating infinitely many expressions of that language.

→ Essentialist notion.

→ Study of language in isolation.

→ Two people could know different I-languages yet generate the same string of words.

E-Language

Extensional: research-based on attested utterances or extensionally definable objects.

External: view that conceives of a language as a public, intersubjectively accessible system used by a community of people.

→ Other speakers can be involved in the study of a language, not just one object.

→ Essentialists oppose this notion.

Competence/Performance

→ **Essentialist distinction** (Chomsky)

→ **Competence:** what knowing a language confers, a grasp of all sentences

→ **Performance:** real-time use of a language

→ **Criticism:** "The structure that underlines a language use reflects the operation of general principles of human cognition, they shape how individual speakers and hearers represent form and meaning."

Semantics

→ **Chomsky:** "Semantics are merely a part of an interface level/form of syntax and are not related to the language faculty." (not *all* Essentialists agree with this view)

→ **Bloomfield:** "It is okay to assign semantics to other fields than language because of the underdeveloped state of semantic research."

→ **Autonomy thesis:** syntactic form is independent from semantics and pragmatics.

Scales

Ordinal scale: a partial ordering equivalence in acceptability or ranking in degree of unacceptability.

Interval scale: a measure of distance between ordinal positions.

Magnitude estimation: a measure of subjects' judgments of physical stimuli on an interval scale.



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Published 11th October, 2014.
Last updated 13th October, 2014.
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