"On the goals of linguistic theory":
Revisiting Chomskyan theories in the era of AI

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Abstract

Theoretical linguistics seeks to explain *what* human language is, and *why*. Linguists and cognitive scientists have proposed different theoretical models of what language is, as well as cognitive factors that shape it, and allow humans to *produce*, *understand*, and *acquire* natural languages. However, humans may no longer be the only ones learning to *generate*, *parse*, and *learn* natural language: artificial intelligence (AI) models such as large language models are proving to have impressive linguistic capabilities. Many are thus questioning what role, if any, such models should play in helping theoretical linguistics reach its ultimate research goals? In this paper, we propose to answer this question, by reiterating the tenets of generative linguistics, a leading school of thought in the field, and by considering how AI models as theories of language relate to each of these important concepts. Specifically, we consider three foundational principles, finding roots in the early works of Noam Chomsky: (1) levels of theoretical adequacy; (2) procedures for linguistic theory development; (3) language learnability and Universal Grammar. In our discussions of each principle, we give special attention to two types of AI models: neural language models and neural grammar induction models. We will argue that such models, in particular neural grammar induction models, do have a role to play, but that this role is largely modulated by the stance one takes regarding each of these three guiding principles.

1   Introduction

One of the central goals of theoretical linguistics is to develop a theory of language which explains how we both *produce* and *understand* language, while also explaining how it is *acquired* by a learner. In other words, theoretical linguistics strive to develop an algorithmic explanation for how we *learn* and eventually *parse* and *generate* language. A central figure whose work helped define this goal is Noam Chomsky. Many

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Goals Of Linguistic Theory

Peter W. Culicover,Giuseppe Varaschin

Goals Of Linguistic Theory:

Goals of Linguistic Theory Stanley Peters,1972   **Goals of Linguistic Theory** Stanley Peters,1972   **Syntax** Robert D. Van Valin (Jr.),Randy J. LaPolla,1997-12-11 An introduction to syntactic theory and analysis   *Goals in Linguistic Theory, Edited by Stanley Peters* Paul Peters,1972   **The Goals of Linguistic Theory Revisited** Roger C. Schank,Y. Wilks,1973 An examination is made of the original goals of generative linguistic theory It is suggested that these goals were well defined but misguided with respect to their avoidance of the problem of modeling performance With developments such as generative semantics it is no longer clear that the goals are clearly defined The authors argue that it is vital for linguistics to concern itself with the procedures that humans use in language They then introduce a number of basic human competencies in the field of language understanding understanding in context and the use of inferential information and argue that the modeling of these aspects of language understanding requires procedures of a sort that cannot be easily accomodated within the dominant paradigm In particular the report holds that the procedures that will be required in these cases ought to be linguistic and that a simple importation of techniques from logic may create a linguistics in which there cannot be procedures of the required sort Modified author abstract   **Linguistic Theory** Robert-Alain De Beaugrande,2014-02-24 In Linguistic Theory Robert de Beaugrande analyses linguistic theories not as abstract ideas or theses but as the process and product of theoretical discourse He argues that the best documentation of this discourse can be found in the fundamental works of major linguists from Ferdinand de Saussure to Teun van Dijk and Walter Kintsch He therefore employs the highly unusual strategy of a close reading of these works as discourse performances and strives to uncover their main points and characteristic moves in the linguist s own words Through this approach the reader is able to appreciate and understand the variety and controversy among linguistic theories as they have emerged and developed in interaction with each other Special scrutiny is allocated to the issue of how far the active practice of the linguists followed their own theories and proposals and why The author concludes by assessing the prospects for linguistics to be drawn from the retrospect in the previous chapters

Natural Language Parsing and Linguistic Theories U. Reyle,C. Rohrer,2012-12-06 presupposition fails we now give a short introduction into Unification Grammar Since all implementations discussed in this volume use PROLOG with the exception of BlockjHaugeneder we felt that it would also be useful to explain the difference between unification in PROLOG and in UG After the introduction to UG we briefly summarize the main arguments for using linguistic theories in natural language processing We conclude with a short summary of the contributions to this volume UNIFICATION GRAMMAR 3 Feature Structures or Complex Categories Unification Grammar was developed by Martin Kay Kay 1979 Martin Kay wanted to give a precise defmition and implementation of the notion of feature Linguists use features at nearly all levels of linguistic description In phonetics for instance the phoneme b is usually described with the features bilabial voiced and nasal In the case of b the first two features get the value the third nasal gets the value Feature value pairs in phonology are normally

represented as a matrix bilabial voiced I nasal Feature matrix for b In syntax features are used for example to distinguish different noun classes The Latin noun murus would be characterized by the following feature value pairs gender masculin number singular case nominative pred murus Besides a matrix representation one frequently fmds a graph representation for feature value pairs The edges of the graph are labelled by features The leaves denote the value of a feature *Ideology and Linguistic Theory* Geoffrey J. Huck,John A. Goldsmith,1995 This revisionist and highly controversial book argues that Chomsky s triumph in interpretative semantics was a result of the opposing side s failure to establish an institutional base This is a radical re appraisal of Chomsky s paradigm **Linguistics: The Cambridge Survey: Volume 2, Linguistic Theory: Extensions and Implications** Frederick J. Newmeyer,1988-04-21 Linguistics The Cambridge Survey is a comprehensive introduction to prevalent research in all branches of the field of linguistics from syntactic theory to ethnography of speaking from signed language to the mental lexicon from language acquisition to discourse analysis Each chapter has been written by a specialist particularly distinguished in his or her field who has accepted the challenge of reviewing the current issues and future prospects in sufficient depth for the scholar and with sufficient clarity for the student Each volume can be read independently and has a particular focus Volume I covers the internal structure of the language faculty itself while Volume II considers the evidence for and the implications of a generativist approach to language Psycholinguistics and neurolinguistics are covered in Volume III and Volume IV concentrates on sociolinguistics and the allied fields of anthropological linguistics and discourse and conversation analysis Several of the chapters in the work concentrate on the interface between different aspects of linguistic theory or the boundaries between linguistic theory and other disciplines Thus in both its scope and in its approach the Survey is a unique and fundamental work of reference It undoubtedly fulfils the editor s principal aim of providing a wealth of information insight and ideas that will excite and challenge all readers with an interest in linguistics *The Minimalist Program* Fahad Rashed Al-Mutairi,2014-10-16 The development of the Minimalist Program MP Noam Chomsky s most recent generative model of linguistics has been highly influential over the last twenty years It has had significant implications not only for the conduct of linguistic analysis itself but also for our understanding of the status of linguistics as a science The reflections and analyses in this book contain insights into the strengths and the weaknesses of the MP These include a clarification of the content of the Strong Minimalist Thesis SMT a synthesis of Chomsky s linguistic and interdisciplinary discourses and an analysis of the notion of optimal computation from conceptual empirical and philosophical perspectives This book will encourage graduate students and researchers in linguistics to reflect on the foundations of their discipline and the interdisciplinary nature of the topics explored will appeal to those studying biolinguistics neurolinguistics the philosophy of language and other related disciplines *Natural Language and Universal Grammar: Volume 1* John Lyons,1991-09-12 Essays by one of the most influential scholars in modern linguistics including previously unpublished pieces **Evidence and Argumentation in Linguistics**

Thomas A. Perry,2017-11-07 No detailed description available for Evidence and Argumentation in Linguistics **Principles of Structural Linguistics** Sebastian K. Saumjan,2017-12-04 No detailed description available for Principles of Structural Linguistics *The Lexicon* James Pustejovsky,Olga Batiukova,2019-01-17 An accessible introduction to lexical structure and design and the relation of the lexicon to grammar as a whole The Lexicon can be used for introductory and advanced courses and includes a range of exercises and in class activities designed to engage students and help them acquire the knowledge and skills they need **NIST, National Institute of Standards and Technology** National Institute of Standards and Technology (U.S.),1994 History of Linguistics, Vol. 2 Hans Aarsleff,Robert Austerlitz,Dell Hymes,Edward Stankiewicz,2021-03-22 No detailed description available for History of Linguistics Vol 2 On Language and Linguistics M.A.K. Halliday,2006-03-01 For nearly half a century Professor M A K Halliday has been enriching the discipline of linguistics with his keen insights into the social demiotic phenomenon we call language This volume includes papers that explore different aspects of language froma systemic functional perspective *Linguistic Theory and Computer Applications* P. Whitelock,1987 Deconstructing Syntactic Theory Peter W. Culicover,Giuseppe Varaschin,2025-06-12 Deconstructing Syntactic Theory is a critical examination of the assumptions and methodologies of contemporary derivational syntactic theory The study ranges from the earliest work inspired by Chomsky s Syntactic Structures and Aspects of the Theory of Syntax to the present day Minimalist Program The book begins with an examination of the relationship between syntactic structure linear order and meaning and the role of uniformity in motivating derivational analysis that assume movement and invisible structure A central property of such analyses is that they are cryptoconstructional construction specific stipulations are assumed in order to derive the form and meaning of expressions The second part looks at a range of technical and empirical problems of derivational syntax which require theoretical stipulations and devices to properly constrain cryptoconstructional analyses The focus is particularly on problems relating to movement and problems of invisibility In Part III the authors turn to the question of the independent justification of syntactic structure arguing that much hierarchical structure is not only unnecessary but also does not yield optimal analyses for a number of grammatical phenomena Part IV focuses on the use of syntax to account for phenomena that are arguably not syntactic it concludes that using syntax to model semantic phenomena is at best not necessary and at worse empirically inadequate Similarly using syntax to model morphological relations works only for a narrow subset of cases and cannot be sustained more generally without causing significant internal problems The book concludes with a review of minimalism laying out aspects of the logic of the Minimalist Program its assumptions and their motivations and consequences The authors argue that minimalism is best achieved by a leaner theory of linguistic representations along the lines of the constructional architecture of Simpler Syntax as proposed by Culicover and Jackendoff 2005 **Parameter Setting** Thomas Roeper,Edwin Williams,2012-12-06 In May 1985 the University of Massachusetts held the first conference on the parameter setting model of grammar and acquisition

The conference was conceived in the belief that there is a new possibility of tightly connecting grammatical studies and language acquisition studies and that this new possibility has grown out of the new generation of ideas about the relation of Universal Grammar to the grammar of particular languages The papers in this volume are all concerned in one way or another with the parametric model of grammar and with its role in explaining the acquisition of language Before summarizing the accompanying papers I would like to sketch the intellectual background of these new ideas It has long been the acknowledged goal of grammatical theorists to explicate the relation between the experience of the child and the knowledge of the adult Somehow the child selects a unique grammar by assumption compatible with a random partially unreliable sample of some language In the earliest work in generative grammar starting with Chomsky s Aspects and extending to such works as Jackendoffs Lexicalist Syntax 1977 the model of this account was the formal evaluation metric accompanied by a general rule writing system The model of acquisition was the following the child composed a grammar by writing rules in the rule writing system under the constraint that the rules must be compatible with the data and that the grammar must be the one most highly valued by the evaluation metric

Whispering the Techniques of Language: An Mental Journey through **Goals Of Linguistic Theory**

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