

Review of: "How to cure the Wittgensteinian anxiety? A two-dimensional approach to speakers' intuitions in linguistics"

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The paper "How to cure the Wittgensteinian anxiety? A two-dimensional approach to speakers' intuitions in linguistics", written by [Hubert Kowalewski](#) from Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (MCSU), Lublin, Poland, highlights the problem of intuitionist and, more broadly, mentalist approach in modern linguistics. This problem appears to be rather complicated as the hostility to such approach goes back to American structuralists. Nowadays most linguists understanding intuition as any subjective evaluation of linguistic expressions performed by a speaker consider application of intuition from either naive consultants or trained linguists in any serious linguistic research is somewhat "unscientific" for the fear that subjective judgments are not reliable sources of knowledge about language.

[Hubert Kowalewski](#) advocates empirical apprehension of cognition solving the problem in terms of a two-dimensionalist and structuralist approach to intuitionist linguistics. Though the paper is intended for the advanced reader because of the high degree of its cognitive complexity, its clear structure, logical sequence of presentation, sufficient vivid illustrations with relevant examples make it readable and informative for a wide range of readers.

Step by step, in each of the six sections of the paper, [Hubert Kowalewski](#) penetrates into the controversial problem of empirical apprehension of cognition.

In Section 1, which is introductory, the author provides a brief overview of philosophical, psychological, linguistic, etc. approaches to the role of intuitions in the process of cognition which involve research procedures of making intuitions about linguistic data and reporting them in the form of typically verbal reports. Thus, in Chomskyan Generative Grammar, intuitions of speaker are used for testing the predictions of grammaticality of sentences. Ronald Langacker's Cognitive Grammar is interested in intuitions regarding acceptability / unacceptability of certain expressions in broadly semantic rather than purely syntagmatic terms. Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory considers intuitions not about properties of isolated expressions, but about intentions of interlocutors acting in particular situations.

Section 2 "The Wittgensteinian anxiety" substantiates the term "the Wittgensteinian anxiety" as an umbrella term, which can be used to denote the worries of American structural linguists caused, as they consider, by the low scientific standards of intuition-driven research. Their concern about what constitutes "good science" goes hand in hand with

Wittgenstein's rationale against the mentalist approach to linguistic meanings expressed in his well-known "beetle in the box" thought experiment. Though such radical anti-mentalism of American structuralism was not long approved as it was swept away by the cognitive revolution of the 1950s-1960s, it highlighted, as [Kowalewski](#) stresses in Section 2, the two basic reasons for rejecting "mentalism": the first is that mental entities are not publicly observable and the second is that the mind itself is too mysterious and nebulous to be used as an explanation of concrete linguistic phenomena.

Section 3 "Genuine and apparent problems with intuitions" focuses on the "scientificness" of intuition-driven research by discussing the truthfulness of the two anti-mentalism arguments: the mysterious nature of the human mind and the unobservability of mental phenomena. [Kowalewski](#) argues that one of the arguments, the mysterious nature of the human mind, loses force as an argument against mentalism in linguistics as no theory in modern linguistics attempts to address explicitly the metaphysical mysteries of the mind; questions of this sort are happily delegated to departments of philosophy and neuroscience. Analysing the second anti-mentalism argument about inobservance of speaker's mental experiences, the author, nonetheless, agrees that the argument is true concerning only the phenomenal aspects of speaker's mental experiences, which are publicly unobservable and ineffable and therefore cannot be used for public science. Nevertheless, some non-phenomenal aspects of mental experience are communicable through reports and can be used for public science. But for Wittgenstein the problem remains as the science requires *public* rather than *private* observability of the phenomena under investigation.

Section 4 "Two-dimensions of an intuition" distinguishes between ineffable phenomenal properties and reportable non-phenomenal properties of mental phenomena, including an intuition about linguistic material, by using the theoretical grounds of two-dimensional semantics developed in analytic philosophy of language. As the theory of reference, two-dimensional semantics is an intensional theory; it focuses on the relationship between certain kinds of linguistic expressions and objects in the physical world and distinguishes between *primary* and *secondary intensions*. Productive for problem solving in the paper is the author's observation that the distinction between primary and secondary intensions partly overlaps with the distinction between reportable and non-reportable properties. Reportable (non-phenomenal) properties of mental experience correlate with primary intensions which correspond to contingent (1-intensional) properties associated with referents in the actual world. Non-reportable (phenomenal, 2-intensional) properties of mental experience correlate with secondary intensions which correspond to the properties that secure the rigidity of reference.

Section 5 "Intuitions and the structure of mental experiences" substantiates the correlation of the non-phenomenal contingent properties with structural properties, which are greatly emphasized by structuralists. Hubert [Kowalewski](#) argues that intuitions about linguistic data can be used fruitfully in structure-oriented linguistics and conceptual analysis. Despite "the precipice between linguistics and philosophy of language is wide and difficult to bridge", the author proves that linguistic meanings are primarily mental. Referring to the mentalists theory which studies the properties of the human mind, rather than just their directly observable manifestations, Hubert stands for the indirect access of verbal reports to mental phenomena, i.e. to take into account the intentions of interlocutors and not only what the interlocutors explicitly say. Cognitive capacities that play a fundamental role in the organization of language are not specific to language. The theoretical background of two-dimensional semantics keeping apart structural and non-structural properties of mental experiences helps the author to come to the conclusion that intuitionist linguistics is compatible with the structuralist vision

of science, at least in principle.

Section 6 “Residual problems” claims that the approach to intuitions in linguistics advocated in the paper poses a lot of questions, as for example, the correlations of primary and secondary intensions. Though the classes of non-phenomenal (contingent, reportable) properties and the classes of phenomenal (necessary, ineffable) ones are overlapping, they are not entirely coextensive. So, the question arises concerning the nature of this dichotomy: if these correlations are incidental and limited in scope. The discussion of this question may demand the discussion of the correlations between seemingly uncorrelated areas: phenomenology, modality, relational character, and reportability. Yet, the author comes to the conclusion: “there is little harm done if there is no deep link between modality, phenomenology, reportability, and relational character, as modal logic and two-dimensional semantics are not prerequisites for successful application of intuitions in linguistics”. The essence of the author’s approach is that “only *some* relational properties of subjective experience are reportable, so that reports from intuitions can serve as sources of information for structuralist linguistics”.

Such a coherent presentation and profound penetration into one of the most complicated problems of mental discourse make Hubert Kowalewski’s efforts fruitful and noteworthy. This empirical approach to subjective experience to mental entities advocated in the paper is effective not only in cognitive linguistics, which incorporates both philosophical, psychological and linguistic fields, but also it could be productive in translation studies. Though cognitive translationology is beyond the remit of the current paper, it would be promising to implement this very approach while analyzing the original texts and their retranslations by different translators in different historical periods of time in order to reveal the ways how the translators’ intuition in creation of his / her translated text becomes apparent and what caused it.

In terms of recommendation: the apprehension of the complicated theoretical material outlined in the paper would become even easier if the author, at his will, supplied more examples to illustrate the application of speaker’s intuition in linguistics more clearly. More detailed conclusions which would emphasize clearly author’s personal position about study could make the paper more structured.

Nonetheless, the research is really up-to-date and reveals the profound reflection of learning about the mental aspect of language. The paper is certainly worth publishing.