

Can Internalism and Externalism be Reconciled in a Biological Epistemology of Language?

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt at exploring the possibility of reconciling the two interpretations of biolinguistics which have been recently projected by Koster (Biolinguistics 3(1):61–92, 2009). The two interpretations—trivial and nontrivial—can be roughly construed as non-internalist and internalist conceptions of biolinguistics respectively. The internalist approach boils down to a conception of language where language as a mental grammar in the form of I-language grows and functions like a biological organ. On the other hand, under such a construal consistent with Koster's (Biolinguistics 3(1):61-92, 2009), the non-internalist version does not necessarily have to be externalist in nature; rather it is a matter of mutual reinforcement of biology and culture under the rubric of a co-evolutionary dynamics. Here it will be argued that the apparent dichotomy between these two conceptions of biolinguistics can perhaps be resolved if we have a richer synthesis that accounts for both internalism and non-internalism.

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