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# Acknowledgement to Newmeyer

**Maarten Lemmens**

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Maarten Lemmens' *Acknowledgement to Newmeyer* stands as the conclusion to the discussion between the authors in the three papers above: Frederick Newmeyer's position paper (<http://journals.openedition.org/cognitextes/1584>), Maarten Lemmens' response paper (<http://journals.openedition.org/cognitextes/1616>) and Frederick Newmeyer's rejoinder to Maarten Lemmens' response paper (<http://journals.openedition.org/cognitextes/1657>).

- 1 In this short statement, I would like to express my appreciation for the positive and constructive discussion that I feel this “Newmeyer-Lemmens tandem paper” has produced.
- 2 First of all, I am quite happy that my response has proven useful to Newmeyer and would like to thank him for his kind acknowledgement. His critique that my response addresses bigger issues than the one his original paper envisaged is quite true. His article does indeed not talk about innateness and the poverty of the stimulus, the autonomy of syntax, rule formalisms, extraction constraints, parameter settings, and all of these notions. My reading of his article led me to assume the ‘usual’ underlying assumptions of the ‘classical’ generative views. His rejoinder clearly points out that this is not the case – point taken! –, and the points that he mentions do lead me to reconsider some issues and they encourage further reflection. Admittedly, Newmeyer’s views may not, as he himself says, line up with the standard views entertained by generative linguistics; nevertheless, this suggests that, after all, the waters may not be as deep as one may think.
- 3 I agree with Newmeyer that there are surely more different flavours of usage-based linguistics than there are of generative linguistics (something that was also remarked in a recent discussion on Funknet). Why this is so, is food for further thought. I am not sure that I would immediately agree to his view that I have my *own* usage-based model, but perhaps there is more truth to his words than I myself realize. Again, food for thought. I

definitely agree with Newmeyer that there are quite a few, let's say, 'less accurate' corpus-based analyses out there. Usage-based linguistics may be particularly more vulnerable to these than more formalist models, precisely because of its commitment to the idea of an emergent grammar, i.e. that grammar emerges from usage. Especially in the last two decades, when "usage-based" often came to mean "corpus-based" (which is not entirely correct, as I indicate in my response), there have been many studies using (or discussing) sophisticated statistical analyses of linguistic data where the method turned out to be more important than the actual linguistic analysis itself, often even found to be flawed. Such purely quantitative research may be quite detrimental to the discipline of linguistics at large, and surely something to be on guard against. I can only reiterate what I said in my conclusion, viz. that independent of the theory one adheres to, accurate analysis of linguistic data is, and remains, one of the cornerstones of our discipline.

- 4 The statement in Newmeyer's rejoinder that I found particularly interesting for further reflection is his claim that "conversational corpora do not challenge *theories* constructed on the basis of introspective judgments, but they most certainly contradict particular *analyses* so constructed". I do not in the least question the value of introspective judgements for linguistic analyses, quite the contrary. What I do have issues with, and tend to reject even, is the idea that one can build a *theory* on introspective judgements. This certainly deserves further reflection and discussion. I hope that there will be other occasions to do so in the not too distant future.
- 5 Finally, I would like to second Newmeyer's call that "big is beautiful" when it comes to corpora, and especially spoken corpora. If linguistics is to be taken seriously as a science, we cannot afford not to invest in such big corpora as one important basis for careful analysis of language used in what one could call its 'ecological niche'. It is to be hoped that institutions world-wide come to see the importance of investing not only in building such corpora but also in making them publicly accessible.

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