

The Future of Semantics

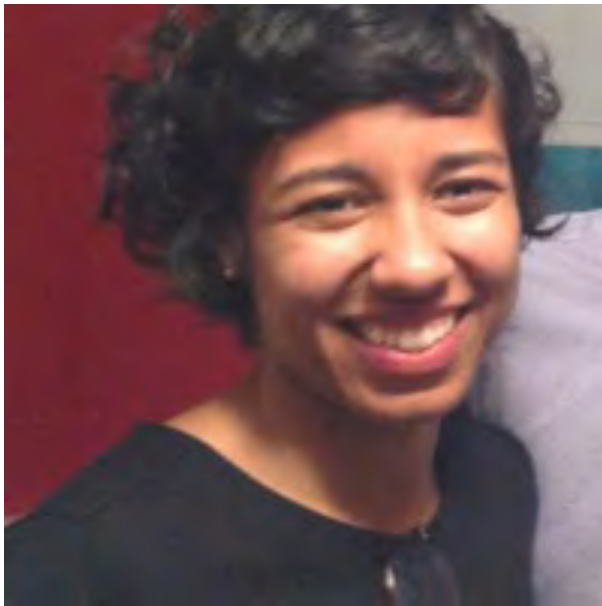
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SMART Cognitive Debate

Amsterdam Colloquium 2013

A simple answer

The future of semantics is the next generation of semanticists and the questions they are asking.



The cognitive turn

- Linguistics is about our capacity to make something we call 'language' from various cognitive resources.
- Semantics is about our capacity to make something we call 'meanings' from various cognitive resources.



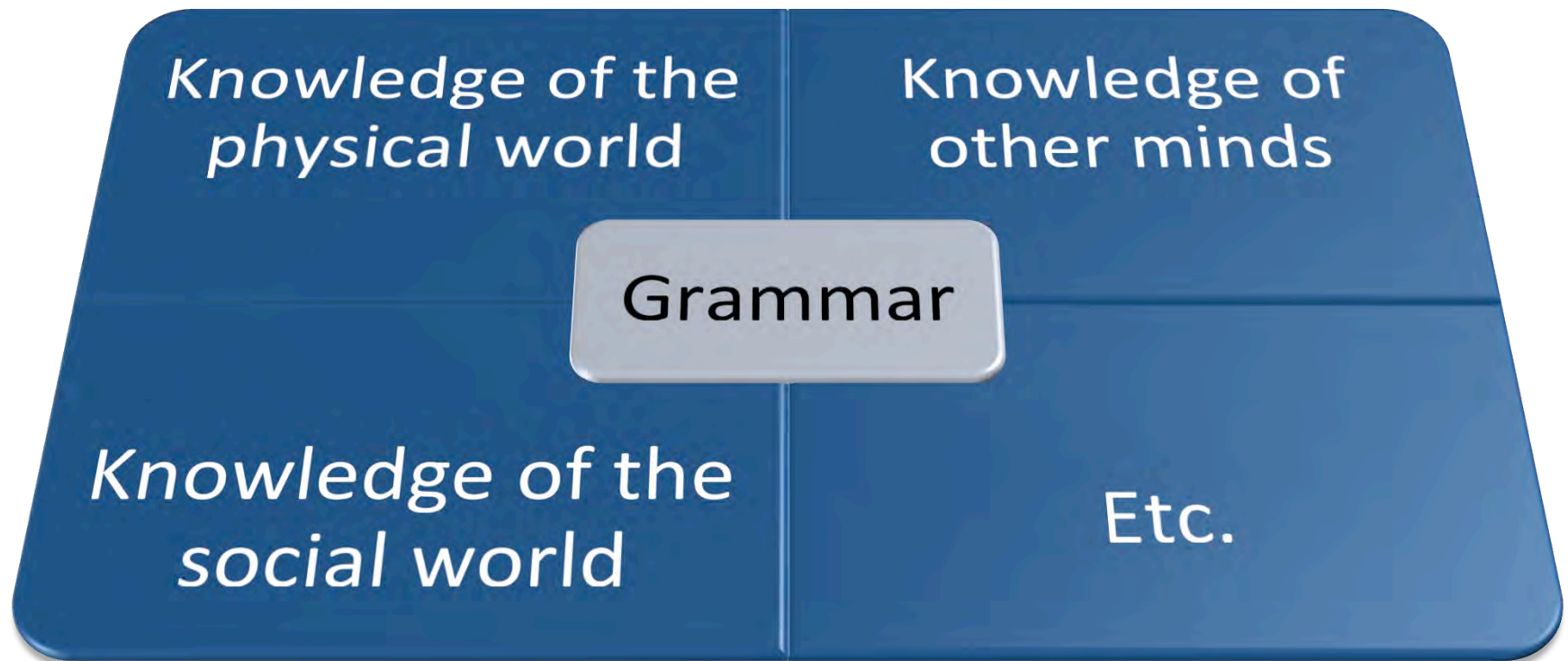
Laurent de la Hyre: Allegory of Grammar

Grammar = Language Faculty

Allows humans to construct complex meanings from different cognitive resources.

Allows humans to make their thoughts audible or visible so that they can be shared with others.

A technology that interacts with vast knowledge resources



Sampler of products

- Notions like ‘agent’, ‘cause’, ‘goal’ are used to make argument structure.
- Interrogative pronouns are used to make quantifier constructions.
- Prosody is used to structure discourse: what is given information, what’s new, what contrasts with what?

Questions

- What's uniform, what's variable in the construction of meanings across languages, spoken or signed?
- How is the interaction between grammar and other cognitive modules represented in the brain? And how does it develop in children?



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