

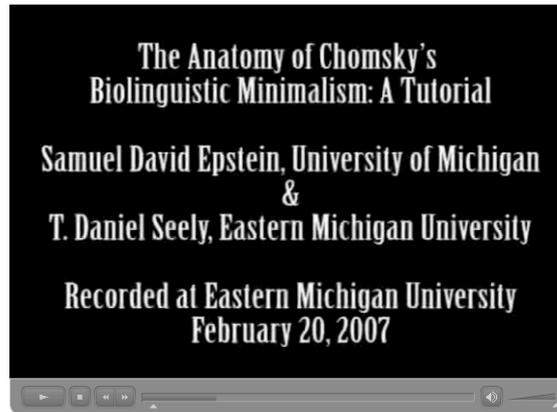
# The Anatomy of Bilingualistic Minimalism

The Anatomy of  
Chomsky's Bilingualistic  
Minimalism:  
A Tutorial

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Part 1  
Part 2  
Part 3  
Part 4  
Part 5  
Part 6



Samuel David Epstein & T. Daniel Seely

URL: <http://elearning.emich.edu/media/Producer/LING/SeelyEpstein.html>

Most of this talk is an exposition (hopefully accurate) of Chomsky's own ideas, with a few of our own hypotheses thrown in. Our goal is to attempt to clarify some of the leading ideas of Chomsky's bilingualistic minimalism, especially those which, even as full time practitioners we have found challenging (at least for us!). We hope that the video clarifies certain issues and what we believe may be misunderstandings of Chomsky's framework and goals, including our own misunderstandings, which the making of this video helped us to clarify. We hope that our attempted clarification here will help contribute to continued bilingualistic inquiry and to continued interdisciplinary work that this framework has already generated. Certainly, none of the issues here are self-evident or simple. We have struggled to understand certain concepts, and hope we do Chomsky's theory justice here, in our attempt to convey the excitement that Chomsky's generative linguistic inquiry and bilingualistic minimalism has engendered. We have tried to be as non-technical as possible, focusing on certain of the foundational issues and current developments of the bilingualistic framework of inquiry.

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Key questions we'll address include:



- What is the object of inquiry in biolinguistic minimalism; and what role do idealization and abstraction play in the formation of this (and other) theories?
- What are the particular idealizations proposed?
- What methods could be used in exploring this object?
- In what sense are the methods “scientific” and in what sense is the inquiry “biological” — more specifically, can anatomy and physiology be concepts pertinent to cognitive science in general, and to linguistics construed as a cognitive science in particular?
- If so what explanatory benefits might this provide?

Biolinguistics construes the human language faculty as a ‘mental organ’ and so we discuss the role of “organology” in biology and biolinguistics. We then discuss methodological considerations. Here we seek to distinguish Organs vs. Behaviors vs. Capacities. The roles of Anatomy and Physiology, as well as the difference between perception and cognition, are also examined. The so-called Mind–Body problem is, again following Chomsky, argued not to be a problem unless one requires that all theoretical postulates be material tangible objects (which would exclude all of science). The theory-driven creativity of experimental laboratory science versus “indiscriminate data collection” is discussed along with the distinction between data on the one hand and evidence (for or against a specific theory) on the other. The nature of the various kinds of evidence currently used in Linguistics, including introspection as well as psycholinguistic and neurolinguistic laboratory methods, is then discussed.

Finally we turn to Minimalism, having hoped to have clarified the term “biolinguistic.” We discuss two kinds of Minimalism, methodological and substantive. The first is a pervasive consideration in scientific explanation under which simplicity of explanation, like empirical coverage, is regarded as vitally important. We hope to illustrate substantive Minimalism with a very simple (we hope tractable) Minimalist syntactic analysis — which itself revisits the roles of organology, anatomy, and physiology within biolinguistic minimalism.

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