Noam Chomsky on Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Contemporary Critique of the Concept of *Language Privatization*

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Abstract

In contemporary sociological studies, Wittgenstein, in his *Philosophical Investigations,* contends that the concept of a private language is unattainable due to the inherent necessity of shared meanings and societal conventions within language. Wittgenstein posits that language is intrinsically tied to social norms and communal practices, asserting that the acquisition of language is inseparable from cultural immersion and participation in shared activities – what he terms "playing the game" of language. In contrast, Noam Chomsky challenges this perspective by proposing the existence of a universal grammar innate to humanity, irrespective of factors like race, ethnicity, or demographics. According to Chomsky, while diverse languages may exhibit different word arrangements, there exists a fundamental universality in the underlying meaning of sentences. He suggests that this universal grammar is accessible to individuals through a theoretical cognitive mechanism known as the *Language Acquisition Device.* Chomsky's theory posits that humans possess an inborn capacity for language, allowing them to grasp the fundamental structures and rules of any language they encounter, transcending cultural or social boundaries. In this philosophical research project, the authors will re-introduce the debate and its contemporary status. The authors aim to give a strategic in-depth Chomskyan criticism of what Wittgenstein has deemed impossible to arise: *Private Language.*

Keywords: Private Language, Language Game, Universal Grammar, Culture, Language Acquisition Device (LAD)

INTRODUCTION

From *mum-ma* to the world

Humankind perhaps has one of the most peculiar distinctions among all beings: the inclination to possess all that they know of. This virtue of utilizing ownership is made possible through the means of language. Consider a baby born into this world; ignorant and bound by her innocence of her value and the weight she carries. A newborn does not know that the world already has an inaugurated set of rules that dictate the expectations of what she ought to be when she advances through this life. A few moments after she is born, a name is already registered as a signifier of her achievement: a possession of life; an existence. Not so long after, once its eyes start to develop, it now longs to discern a face; hands in the air, grappling with an understanding of who this creature she would later on struggle to utter as *mum-ma*. Whether this two-syllable word is instilled through the relentless repetition of a mother who races to compete against the world to possess the first definition of her offspring to recognize, or a natural innate upbringing of a maternal connection which is contextualized from experience of being literally one through an umbilical cord to a meticulous nurturing environment she is born with, is a point of contention that both philosophy and science are still shrouded in.

The later part of her life commences when she gains her consciousness. The introduction of the vastness of the world is gradually installed through education and discovered through first-hand experience. Perhaps these massive subjects are encapsulated into words to not overwhelm the human mind and strain it to a fatal extent. The simultaneous experience of the world is then carefully sliced down through conversations, and the social practice of language to cater to the capacity and limits of the human mind's framework. From the establishment of the facade of the world for a new-born to the formative years of grasping meaning of a child, and developed stage of an adult, the subjectivity of language unique to its own could be reduced to one's private understanding, and conflicted through the universal framework that the world is already subscribed to. Meaning is now as essential as ever as it defines the world and the culture that surrounds

its constituents. In a world of words[1] everything is possible. The infinite potential of language is cautiously trodden upon as it is publicized and could be subjected to a reductionist approach to a private language. In this progressive world, the capitalization of language is put into the spotlight as it centers the formulation of ideas and the exacting power of societal change.

Two remarkable authoritative figures in the world of linguistics have an unabating discussion against this concept of private language. In the same fashion that this introduction attempts to use "she" as the primary pronoun through the scholars' discretion, this possessiveness of encapsulating language as a tool is evident. This article looks for an in-depth analysis of Noam Chomsky and Ludwig Wittgenstein's recipe of language and determines whether they are *cooking* against the privatization/weaponization of language or they are merely *waffling*.

In this article, scholars will explore why Noam Chomsky perceives language as universal, delving into the inherent principles that underpin this universality. They will then transition to a discussion on Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of Language Game, examining the influence of cultural and social factors in language construction and questioning the feasibility of a language privatization in this context. Finally, the conclusion will serve as the apex, elucidating why the notion of Private Language is fundamentally implausible, given its universal nature and inherent acquisition by all individuals. Ultimately, the scholars will make a contemporary critique when reconsidering the concept of Private Language as an epistemic phenomenon, finding it untenable in practice. This paper serves as a valuable introductory text that novice students can utilize to explore Noam Chomsky's linguistics and scholars' unconventional approach to re-evaluating the concept of

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[1]This signifies that our understanding of reality is intricately tied to language. Through language, we express, interpret, and communicate our experiences, shaping our perception of the world. Language not only reflects reality but also influences it by shaping beliefs and cultural norms. It serves as a lens through which we view and interpret our surroundings, offering diverse perspectives. Ultimately, the concept emphasizes the vital role language plays in shaping human perception and interaction with reality.

private language in contrast to the cultural and social significance of language construction.

The *Nature* of Language

The inherent variability in language endows individuals with the remarkable ability to construct an infinite spectrum of sentences within their native linguistic framework. This extraordinary linguistic prowess becomes evident in the early stages of human development, aligning closely with the onset of sentence-based communication. Children exhibit an intrinsic aptitude for generating a wide repertoire of sentences, exemplifying the innate creativity and adaptability woven into the fabric of human language from its nascent stages. Chomsky's linguistic theory, rooted in *biolinguistics,* posits that the foundational principles governing language structure are inherently embedded in the human mind and thus transmitted genetically.[2] Regardless of sociocultural disparities, Chomsky contends that all individuals share a universal underlying linguistic structure or *condition of generality*.[3] This theory emphasizes the innate nature of human language acquisition, highlighting the commonality in the fundamental linguistic blueprint that transcends diverse social and cultural contexts. Therefore, language goes beyond cultural boundaries and the specific environment, even in a primitive one, in which a person resides. Every rational individual possesses the inherent ability to learn any language, regardless of its form or cultural context.

During the early 1950s, Noam Chomsky introduced a groundbreaking theory stemming from the observation that the crux of language versatility lies within its grammar. Chomsky's premise centered on the idea that despite encountering unfamiliar sentences, the underlying familiarity of their grammatical structure serves as a navigational guide toward comprehending their intended meaning. In proposing this theory, Chomsky postulated the existence of *inherent*

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[2]John Lyons, *Noam Chomsky,* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978) 4.

[3]Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures Second Edition,* (Berlin; Walter de Gruyter, 2002) 50.

grammatical principles that hold sway across all languages. For instance, while different languages may vary in their structural predictability due to their unique grammatical rules, the likelihood of one word following another in sequence remains consistent across languages. Moreover, he posited that these rules are *biologically innate,* intricately woven into the cognitive architecture of the human brain, facilitating language processing according to these universal principles.[4]

      Chomsky, alongside fellow scholars, embarked on a rigorous inquiry aimed at exploring the fundamental elements constituting universal grammar. Their investigation primarily focused on two core facets: firstly, the existence of grammar principles universally applicable across all languages; and secondly, the inquiry into whether these principles are inherently encoded within the human brain or - in Chomsky's own words - the *Language Acquisition Device*.

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                       Sentence
          ┌───────────────┴───────────────┐
         NP                               VP
    ┌─────┴─────┐              ┌───────────┴───────────┐
    T           N             Verb                     NP
    │           │              │              ┌─────────┴─────────┐
   the         man            hit             T                   N
                                              │                   │
                                             the                 ball
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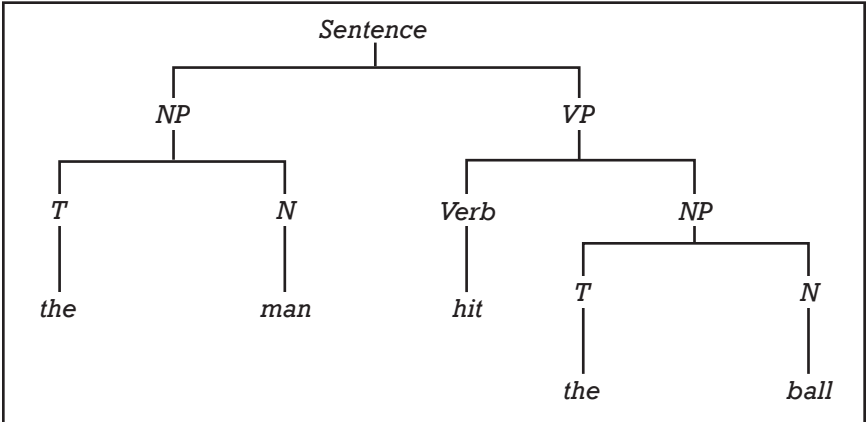
Figure 1.

      In the pursuit of identifying these universal grammar rules, Chomsky formulated an analytical framework termed *generative syntax* (as presented in the figure on the right[5]). This tool serves as a method to delineate the structure of sentences through the creation of hierarchical

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[4]Noam Chomsky, "Systems of Syntactic Analysis", *The Journal of Symbolic Logic,* Vol. 18, No. 3 (Sep., 1953), 242-256.

[5]Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures Second Edition,* (Berlin; Walter de Gruyter, 2002) 27.

syntax trees. These trees depict the potential structural arrangements within a sentence, offering a visual representation of permissible linguistic structures.

Generative grammar is a linguistic framework that views grammar as a set of rules designed to produce all grammatically acceptable sentences within a specific language.[6] These rules are explicitly defined and can be repeatedly applied to generate an infinite array of sentences of varying lengths. Notably, generative grammar differs from structural and functional models by focusing on the initial generation of linguistic elements within the verb phrase. At its core, generative grammar operates through a systematic application of rules that construct sentences from their most basic elements. This approach allows for the creation of an extensive range of grammatically correct sentences, offering flexibility in length and complexity. The key distinction lies in how the language's structural components are initially generated, with a particular emphasis placed on the role of the verb phrase as the starting point within this framework.[7]

The linguistic theory outlined in his conception of generative grammar posits then the existence of language's two main components: *Deep Structure* and *Surface Structure.* While the former represents the underlying meaning or semantic/hermeneutical value of an enunciation organized according to the rules of universal grammar, the latter refers to the *actual form* or grammatical arrangement and *phonetic forms* that we acquire, produce, or perceive. Chomsky's idea of deep and surface structures explains how people create and understand countless sentences while following grammar rules, shedding light on how meaning relates to sentence structure in languages.[8]

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[6]Ibid.

[7]Christopher S. Butler, *Structure and Function: A Guide to Three Major Structural-Functional Theories, Part I: Approaches to the Simplex Clause,* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia; John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2003), 121-124.

[8]Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures Second Edition,* (Berlin; Walter de Gruyter, 2002) 24-25.

Through generative syntax, Chomsky aimed to elucidate and demonstrate the conceivable orders and arrangements of words within sentences across various languages, thereby shedding light on the underlying universality of grammatical rules. The initial analysis from this tree suggests a grammar rule positioning adverbs within verb phrases. However, further examination with expanded data reveals instances where adverbs occur outside verb phrases. This elementary example highlights a significant challenge: the substantial amount of linguistic data required from each language to establish its unique grammatical rules before considering potentially shared rules across languages.

At the inception of Chomsky's proposal of universal grammar, many languages lacked adequate recorded samples essential for comprehensive analysis using generative syntax. Despite accumulating ample data, comprehensively mapping a language's structure remains an exceedingly intricate endeavor. Even after half a century of scrutiny, English's linguistic intricacies remain partially unresolved.

As linguists amassed and scrutinized more data, the vast disparities among languages worldwide became apparent, undermining the premise of universal grammar rules. These divergences across languages challenge the proposition of shared grammatical principles governing all languages.[9] Noam Chomsky refined his linguistic theory to accommodate linguistic variation. This revision gave rise to his principles and parameters framework, suggesting that while all languages adhere to shared grammatical principles, they diverge in their parameters—essentially, the specific application or settings of these universal principles within each language as we encounter them.[10] Chomsky proposed the existence of a singular overarching principle known as *recursion*, signifying the ability to embed structures within one another. As Chomsky proposes:

[9]Noam Chomsky, *Lectures on Government and Binding: The Pisa Lectures,* (USA; Foris Publications, 1988) 3

[10]Ibid, 3-4.

An infinite class of deep structures much like I can be generated by very simple rules that express a few rudimentary grammatical functions, if we assign to these rules a recursive property – in particular, one that allows them to embed structures of the form [s . . .]s within other structures. Grammatical transformations will then iterate to form, ultimately, a surface structure that may be quite remote from the underlying deep structure. The deep structure may be highly abstract; it may have no close point-by-point correlation to the phonetic realization. Knowledge of a language – "linguistic competence," in the technical sense of this term discussed briefly in the first lecture – involves a mastery of these grammatical processes.[11]

Hence, by allowing these rules to embed structures within one another, grammatical transformations iteratively shape a surface structure that may seem distant from its initial deep structure. The deep structure, being highly abstract, lacks a direct one-to-one correlation with its eventual phonetic realization. Mastery of language, termed "linguistic competence," involves understanding these underlying grammatical processes beyond mere vocabulary and syntax, encompassing the intricate transformations that guide the formation and comprehension of language. Essentially, this view highlights that linguistic competence involves navigating the abstract structures and transformations that underlie the construction of coherent and meaningful language expressions. This concept entails the nesting of linguistic elements, allowing for the construction of hierarchical structures within language.

Universal Grammar and Language Acquisition *Device*

Chomsky's theory of Universal Grammar establishes a fundamental *scaffold* for language acquisition, providing the *blueprint* essential for constructing grammatically correct sentences across diverse languages. Central to this theory is the introduction of the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) residing within the human brain.

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[11]Noam Chomsky, *Language and Mind,* Third ed., (New York; Cambridge University Press, 2005) 27.

The LAD is conceived as an innate cognitive mechanism housing essential linguistic principles, enabling children to navigate language complexities, process linguistic input, and construct coherent sentences with remarkable ease.

While the LAD is influenced by environmental language exposure, Chomsky maintains its uniqueness to humans, delineating language acquisition as a distinct human faculty separate from general cognitive abilities. This intrinsic mechanism empowers children to seamlessly acquire language, even in the absence of explicit instruction, adapting effortlessly to the specific grammatical patterns of their native tongue. Chomsky's theory underscores the pivotal role of innate knowledge in language acquisition, portraying Universal Grammar and the Language Acquisition Device as cornerstones highlighting humanity's inherent capacity to effortlessly acquire and utilize language, guided by intrinsic grammatical rules and a specialized cognitive mechanism within the brain.

Indeed, Chomsky's perspective on language acquisition distinguishes him from both behaviorism and empiricism. Rejecting the behaviorist notion that language learning is solely a product of environmental stimuli and responses, Chomsky's framework posits language as an innate, biologically rooted capacity of the human mind. This viewpoint underscores the universality of language acquisition across human populations, asserting it as a fundamental aspect of human biology rather than a learned behavior contingent upon cultural or environmental factors alone.

Chomsky's stance represents a departure from behaviorism's emphasis on observable behaviors and stimuli-response associations. He argues that language acquisition cannot be adequately explained through behaviorist principles, as it involves cognitive processes that transcend simple environmental conditioning. Furthermore, Chomsky's nativist perspective challenges empiricist views by asserting that language learning is not solely dependent on sensory experience and cultural immersion. Instead, he suggests that humans possess an inherent predisposition for language acquisition, which manifests as a universal cognitive capacity shared by all members of the species.

By positioning language as a unique evolutionary development exclusive to humans, Chomsky underscores its distinctiveness from communication systems observed in other animal species. This perspective rejects the idea that language can be reduced to a cultural artifact or learned behavior, emphasizing instead its deep-seated biological underpinnings.

In summary, Chomsky's synthesis of linguistic nativism rejects both behaviorism and empiricism, proposing a biological basis for language acquisition that transcends cultural and environmental influences. This perspective challenges conventional Western thought on language acquisition and highlights the importance of considering innate cognitive capacities in understanding human linguistic behavior.

In summary, children are born with an inherent cognitive capacity for language that precedes actual *language use*, representing the *"psychological reality"* underlying linguistic systems.[12] Their linguistic development primarily involves acquiring the specific characteristics of their native language. Language is an innate aspect of the human mind, present in individuals from birth. Consequently, a child's acquisition of their native language involves shaping this intrinsic mental faculty into a distinct linguistic form. Importantly, this process is not one of behavioral conditioning or habituation, but rather cognitive refinement. Within the Principles and Parameters Theory framework, language acquisition essentially involves establishing the values of linguistic parameters.[13]

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[12] Wolfgang B. Sperlich, *Noam Chomsky,* (London; Reaktion Books Ltd., 2006) 28-29

[13] In his book *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax,* Noam Chomsky introduces the concept known as *Plato's Problem,* drawing parallels to Plato's *Meno* dialogue. The reference pertains to an anecdote where Socrates guides an uneducated youth to produce a sophisticated geometric proof, seemingly from the child's inherent mental faculties. Plato, through Socrates, grapples with the question of the origin of this apparent geometric knowledge. Ultimately, Plato suggests that this knowledge was latent within the child, emerging when triggered by appropriate conditions. Chomsky, aligning with Plato's notion, offers a parallel explanation for language acquisition, proposing that the capacity for language is innate in individuals. He likens this to dormant knowledge, awaiting activation under suitable circumstances. Additionally, Chomsky points to philosophers such as Leibniz and Descartes, who held comparable views regarding the innate nature of fundamental knowledge in distinct domains.

This paradigm provides a cohesive framework for critiquing the notion of language being privatized and devoid of meaning, which is often used to explain solipsistic sensations and other phenomena. To better understand the nature of language, it is essential to contrast it with private language, which typically encompasses entities, objects, and phenomena beyond our direct access. Let us delve deeper into this inquiry.

Language Game *(Sprachspiele)*: Language as Way of Life *(Lebensform)*

Wittgenstein uses the language game concept to grasp and explain the phenomenon of language; every time a person uses language to communicate, they engage in a language game. Like a game, language is bound by rules. To look for an exact rule is the same as looking for the essence of a word, what does language mean? Wittgenstein tells us that there are no such strict rules or absolute essences by which every move in the game must partake to be considered to be in the game. Language then is not bound by an abstract structure, but instead is a social practice. In Wittgenstein's terms, language-game is a way of life, an activity, that involves the use of language. Language functions primarily as a practical usage for communication, words are used under the context of which language game the persons involved are playing rather than obtaining an absolute independent meaning.

Philosophical problems according to Wittgenstein arise from the attempt at separating an independent meaning from how words within a language are used. Problems concerning philosophy according to Wittgenstein do not arise from practical life, it is only when language is used before its actual use we discover 'problems'. An example would be to ask about the essence of things, when we are using language beyond its normal usage, we face problems. Wittgenstein refers to this as "the metaphysical use of language"[14]. The true task of Philosophy then is to disentangle language from this metaphysical use.

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[14]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, (Oxford; Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) 53.

Wittgenstein's language game theory states that words must not be contemplated on their own, the meanings of the words rely heavily on the importance of the context in which the word is used within the relationship of individuals (language game). Language then is rooted in the culture where it is used, and culture can in turn be understood within the functioning language. Language for Wittgenstein is context-bound and is exercised by people within a society. Wittgenstein states that he had reached these conclusions through "an example in which language is used by people engaged in practical work, in which utterances are embedded in action"[15]. Meaning is rooted in the use of language, to imagine language is to imagine a form of life. Words do not have meaning in isolation; the meaning is in the context of life.

If the meaning of language is intertwined with a way of life, it cannot be separated from it. In this sense, words only have meaning in a particular way of life. Using language then becomes a communal activity and the meanings of words are determined in that community. Using language and meaning is possible through agreement within the said community, this is not an agreement of opinion, but rather, an agreement on the way of life. The agreement is not a decision based on opinion, but an agreement to do the same things and act the same way through observing the same ways of life. Agreements in language are not based on philosophical assumptions or scientific findings. The concepts of language and the meanings of words are guided by rules within the language game, they are rule-governed. The meaning of the word is an employment of it, it is what we learn when the word is incorporated into our language. Hence, there exists a correspondence between *'rules'* and *'learning'*. Learning a language and knowing its meaning requires following a rule, to know how to use language means to know how to apply these rules.

Wittgenstein states that language is not a mental process, understanding language is not a mental action. Both knowing how to use a word and understanding a word are similar in the part wherein they are both abilities to follow certain rules. It does not have a starting

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[15]C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning*, (New York; A Harvest Book, 1946) 312.

point and an endpoint like mental states, for example, pain; pain has duration, a starting point, and an end. Knowing and understanding are not mental experiences that one has inside one's head, but an ability. One's understanding of a game is judged by one's ability to play when one is playing the actual game. For Wittgenstein, "[t]o follow a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are customs"[16]. To understand a language means to exhibit mastery over custom and the usage *(Gebrauch)* which were established. To understand language, one must follow established rules. It is not possible to follow rules only once, because language game rules are intertwined with everyday life.

> This summary is intended to bring out the connections between the notions of meaning, understanding, use, rules, and their basis in agreement within a community of language users. But one should not take it to imply that it is possible to understand expressions *individually,* for in Wittgenstein's view it makes no sense to say that someone understands just one or a few sentences, or that he follows just one or a few rules. To understand any given sentence is to understand the language games of which it is part; correlatively, to follow a rule is to have mastery of the practice of rule-following itself.[17]

Understanding a sentence entails grasping its relationship to the broader context of language games, while rule-following encompasses mastery of the entire practice rather than adherence to isolated directives. This viewpoint underscores the holistic nature of language comprehension, suggesting that to truly understand a sentence or follow a rule, one must appreciate its connection to the broader framework and conventions within a linguistic community.

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[16]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, (Oxford; Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) 87.

[17]A.C. Grayling, *Wittgenstein A Very Short Introduction* (USA; Oxford University Press, 1988) 96.

Private Language

The private language argument primarily delves into how we conceptualize and articulate our inner experiences, sensations, and mental processes. However, at its core, the argument revolves around deeper questions concerning the nature of language itself. It prompts us to consider what qualifies as a language and what confers meaning upon language. Today, we'll aim to unpack Ludwig Wittgenstein's insights and arguments to gain a clearer understanding of these complex linguistic and philosophical issues.

Wittgenstein states that "[t]o think one is following a rule is not to follow a rule. And that's why it's not possible to follow a rule 'privately'; otherwise, thinking one was following a rule would be the same thing as following it"[18]. Private rule-following is impossible because everyone will be able to construct their own private rules and follow those rules privately which cannot be called a language. Regularity will cease to exist and there will be no criteria of correctness. There can be no private rule-following, there can also be no private language. Our language is connected to our way of life and the expression of language is shared through our common way of life. Wittgenstein questions if our way of life is different: "What would it be like if human beings did not manifest their pains (did not groan, grimace, etc.)? Then it would be impossible to teach a child the use of the word 'toothache'."[19] One cannot have one's own form of private language about one's own feelings and sensations; because not only would that lead to a painful situation of our inability to communicate our feelings and sensations to others; but also, to the absurdity of communicating ourselves through a language that makes no distinction between right and wrong rule-following.

The purpose of using language is for people to share their feelings and express themselves in the community of life. Wittgenstein states this clearly: "'[w]ithout language we could not communicate

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[18]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, (Oxford; Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) 87.

[19]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, (Oxford; Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) 98.

with one another' – but for sure: without language we cannot influence other human beings in such-and-such ways; cannot build roads and machines, and so on. And also: without the use of speech and writing, human beings could not communicate"[20]. He continues, "To invent a language could mean to invent a device for a particular purpose on the basis of the laws of nature (or consistently with them)"[21]. As stated earlier, using language is possible because of an agreement in a way of life. Agreement and way of life are preconditions of the language game. That is, people can agree on their current use of the rules of their language, and sharing the same way of life is crucial for the language game to exist. That is not the case for private language. He initiates discussion on a private language, focusing on a linguistic system where terms denote individual, concealed entities such as internal experiences—sensations, emotions, or mental states. For instance, consider the sensation of pain or warmth—an individual may ascribe words within this language to represent such subjective occurrences perceived within their consciousness.

Language and *Culture*

Wittgenstein employs an anthropological concept of language instead of a calculus concept. This anthropological concept does not place emphasis on notions of truth, truth-condition, representation, and force, but rather to use language game, understanding, and communication. The anthropological conception of language puts the meaning of words as they are used in a language game, not in isolation from human activities. The meaning of sentences is outside rather than inside the users of the language, in the sense that what one thinks or makes up does not comprise the meaning of the words, but it is what one does and how one employs the words and sentences that matter. How one employs a language is guided by the custom of usage within a language game. The rules and customs of language games are neither fixed nor rigid. They are liable to change according to the needs and demands of the game in which they are played. A single word cannot

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[20]Ibid, 145.

[21]Ibid, 145.

be understood and does not have meaning in isolation from the whole language game where they are employed. Meaning acquires their sense in the context of human life. This is Wittgenstein's concept of language; the meaning of language is intertwined with life. The meaning cannot be considered apart from the life where they are used. Language represents not only reality, but they are in conformity with nature. The meaning does not lie in the nature of things or the user. The meaning of language can only be found in the way of life they are used. Without these ways of living, without culture, they are dead signs. Moreover, on a critical note, language has inherent cultural rules but is acquired and created due to our rational nature - as an *experiencing subject.* The formation of language thus involves a dynamic interaction between innate biological predispositions (nature) and sociocultural influences (culture). While innate cognitive abilities provide a foundation for language acquisition, cultural factors shape the specific linguistic forms and expressions that emerge within a community.

Language and life cannot be separated from each other. Wittgenstein writes, "[t]o imagine a language means to imagine a form of life"[22]. In this sense, it can be said that the way of life is the culture which gives language its meaning. Language is situated in culture, and language also reflects culture. Language and its concept reflect what a culture considers to be of utmost importance and apprehensive. While different cultures will have different bearings to the meanings of language and words, there are facts of nature that human beings share. For example, 'death' – it is a fact that all human beings will die one day. All cultures have different words for death, the concept of the end of one's life. However, we find the meaning here and what emotions people have on death can be different depending on the culture. Therefore, the meaning of "death" cannot be stripped of its emotional and cultural bearing. From this understanding of language and its relationship with culture, we can derive the following point which can be interpreted as features of culture in accordance with the relationship between language and culture from Wittgenstein's perspective.

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[22]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, (Oxford; Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) 11.

Culture is public because meaning *(bedeutung)* is public, culture has meaning only as a practice within society. Knowing the meaning and understanding what it means to say or do is knowing how to follow the rules of a culture's language game. Following rules is following an established quality that others have followed before. For customs and symbols to have any authority and meaning, it has to be a practice where members can understand each other and have an agreement on what they do. Culture is not an idea or knowledge that is memorized and present in the minds and hearts of its members. Having culture rather, means that one masters the practices, and knows the values of the practices. This knowledge of practice and value is shown in their actions and everyday lives, which means that culture is not what one thinks or stores in memory, but the way one leads one's life. Culture is practice and action which carries meaning. Shaking the hand or kissing the cheek of the other is not greeting unless one knows the implications of such actions. These are symbols of greeting within a specific culture. Greetings do not have any ontological status or independent realities apart from the meaning given by humans. To partake in action means to know what it means to partake in the said action.

It doesn't mean however that meaning is fixed, but it is meaning that is agreed upon that can be counted to be meaningful, it is pointless to partake in an action without intending what it means. Wittgenstein says, *"The game, one would like to say, has not only rules but also a point"*[23]. Culture is also public in the sense that practices and values are not private, it can only be known and understood by members, not by outsiders. Actions and gestures cannot be understood easily from outside of the language game, and they have their meanings within that particular system. Culture isn't a *closed system* with a definite boundary where one can separate culture from the other with a specific practice of their own. There are actions, practices, and values which are shared between different cultures in different ways. Some might share religion, food, and so on. Like family resemblance, this is one way different cultures communicate and understand each other, by sharing practices. Given the cultural dimension of language and our inherent biological

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[23]Ibid. 158.

predispositions, it becomes apparent that private language contradicts its own premise. As language acquisition is intricately intertwined with both cultural and biological factors, it follows that language inherently functions as a public phenomenon. The essence of language lies in its capacity to facilitate interpretative access to phenomena. Consequently, when we contemplate language, we essentially consider its ability to designate objects or concepts within our shared cognitive realm. This contention aligns with Wittgenstein's critique, wherein he challenges the notion of language as a medium solely for private representation.

How do outsiders understand concepts of actions from other language games? Can outsiders learn these concepts like a child learns from elders? Wittgenstein's answer is that humans share a form of behavior, and interpretation of an unknown language can be carried out with reference to that shared form of behavior. This way of life which all beings share, biologically and physiologically. However, actions such as greetings are cultural activities. What references do outsiders have to understand them? The answer is that the outsider might not share the practice as the members of that particular language game do but it does not mean that it is not possible to understand the practice. Wittgenstein says "One learns this when one comes into a strange country with entirely strange traditions; and, what is more, even though one has mastered the country's language. One does not understand the people. (And not because of not knowing what they are saying to themselves.) We can't find our feet with them"[24]. Here, Wittgenstein details another form of understanding, which means mastering a technique. One who isn't immersed in a language game can understand the meaning of an action, however they cannot do this the members do. Actions carry lots of concepts. It can also mean that outsiders are not capable of understanding all these meanings. Complete mastering is not possible in a short time, but that doesn't mean that understanding is not possible. Understanding and knowing cultural practices are possible for people not immersed in language games.

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[24]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, (Oxford; Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) 9.

CONCLUSION

The fraternal twin pillar that Chomsky and Wittgenstein established, showcased key points in critiquing the *privatization* of language. An immediate conclusion towards their literary work says that the very concept of private language is not merely impossible, but also constitutes a pressing concern of the limits of language. Language could not be reduced to an understanding unique to one's self and defined within the parameters that are not publicized. This is spearheaded by the article on the nature of language whereas Chomsky claims it as a genetic trait passed down to next generations which already foreshadows that language is universal in nature, but imparted as a social device. This theory that posits an innate ability to grasp language also leads to his discovery that although Chomsky recognizes the laws and principles inherent to language, language is still a process of "free creation" and is "infinitely varied". In line with the upbringing of the *mum-ma* in the preceding introduction, Chomsky claims that this innate ability is omnipresent among children before *actual* language use. Thus, it creates a shared phenomenon that is evident from the early stages of life; again, emphasizing that it is not privately instilled. This further supports the debunking of the concept of private language whereas it counters the contention of defining the world with an individual's personal experience and own understanding; that of which could be reduced to merely an opinion rather than the *truths* following the universal nature of language.

This brings us closer by examining the parallel of Wittgenstein through his concept of the *Language Game*. Apparent to a game that has its own sets of rules that a player abides by, so does language. Perhaps it is essential to add and conclude that to play this game, one needs to participate in a social affair. *"It always takes two to tango"* as the famous line suggests. For Wittgenstein, it must not be understood merely as a game but as a *way of life*. The origin of language may be a mystery postulated from the exhaustion of grunts and random noises made by our ancestors, or as a necessity to survive in harsher conditions; even perhaps to sing songs of death, life, and the tranquil of life, but one thing is certain–that it is mainly employed as means of

expression – a way to communicate. There is an interplay of culture and reality that is heavily reliant on following the language game as it is religiously followed through as a custom by generations of its players. There is an agreement among its components to decide the meaning of varied knowledge of subjects. Hence, it is undeniable that language transcends the grammatical set of rules or set of vocabularies and phonetic expressions, but also reflects the world – that is, our reality *(weltanchauung; pag-dungaw).* This consensus is evidence that the privatization of language is improbable or, worse, dangerous.

Although there is a distinction between the two critical thinkers and their theories, they conclude with the same notion that a private language is unfeasible. Upon closer inspection, the very notion of a private language is an inquiry that aims to stain a universal truth and perhaps to shape it to one's permissivist stance which, at times, is a product of social imbalance in the cultural fabric. Chomsky's view of this innate universal language and Wittgenstein's lens of language as a game is still set up for debate, but on its facet, demonstrates the danger of relentlessly reexamining meaning until it takes form in accordance with one's belief.

Upon closer examination, this calculated manipulation of language not only conforms to personal experiences and sensations but also indulges in the deliberate distortion of explaining certain phenomena, a practice antithetical to the principles upheld in Chomskyan linguistic theories which ultimately condescends the human capacity to conform with *natural truths* and regress the *dialectic teleologism* of human existence. This method, steeped in anti-intellectual distortions, deviates from the essence of intellectual discourse and genuine inquiry. Chomsky emphasizes the potentials of what Wittgenstein has reiterated in his philosophical investigations:

> The emerging biolinguistic approach adopted a different stance. It took the object of inquiry to be, not behavior and its products, but the internal cognitive systems that enter into action and interpretation, and, beyond that, the basis in our

fixed biological nature for the growth and development of these internal systems.[25]

By unraveling the internal cognitive mechanisms guiding language development and interpretation, this approach presents an opportunity to comprehend the inherent truths embedded within human communication. As language stands as a fundamental tool for expression and understanding, delving into its biological underpinnings not only enhances our grasp of psychological truth but also holds the potential to amplify human flourishing. Understanding the intricate relationship between our cognitive faculties and linguistic abilities opens avenues for fostering genuine understanding, facilitating more profound connections, and fostering a shared pursuit of truth that enriches human experience and enables individual and collective growth.

One ethical consideration is the potential for private language to foster *misunderstanding* and *miscommunication*. Language serves as a tool for interpersonal connection and mutual understanding, facilitating cooperation and collaboration within communities. When one attempts to arrest the meaning of immediate sensations or playful term designations through *introspection*, it would never lead to the *genuine definition.*

> Introspection can never lead to a definition. It can only lead to a psychological statement about the introspector. If, e.g., someone says: "I believe that when I hear a word that I understand I always feel something that I don't feel when I don't understand the word"—that is a statement about his peculiar experiences. Someone else perhaps feels something quite different; and if both of them make correct use of the word "understand" the essence of understanding lies in this use, and not in what they may say about what they experience.[26]

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[25]Noam Chomsky, *Language and Mind,* Third ed., (New York; Cambridge University Press, 2005) vii-viii.

[26]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology: Volume 1* (Oxford; Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1980) 44.

When individuals rely solely on private linguistic systems, they risk *alienating* themselves from others and hindering effective communication, leading to potential conflicts and *social fragmentation.* Moreover, the opacity of private language poses challenges for accountability and transparency. In public discourse and institutional contexts, language plays a crucial role in expressing intentions, conveying information, and negotiating agreements. If individuals employ private languages that are inaccessible to others, it becomes difficult to hold them accountable for their actions or to ensure transparency in decision-making processes while it also undermines the intricate human biological nature and its features. Moreover, if immediate sensations and potential existence of nonsensical language appropriation proliferate, especially for those who acquire it, it might be tremendously problematic for either exclusion (alienating) or inclusion (to the meaninglessness) might happen.

The critique of the concept of private language lies in its significance by understanding the current trend and culture that is emphasized by language. Although the two philosophies conclude with the dismissal of private language, it should be noted that this should be further studied. The possibility of a private language challenges the very core of formulating ideas and the vessel from which language prosper. Conceivably, private language might be revolutionary in exploring new meanings towards not just language, but of reality that is agreed upon by the majority or society, or merely put into discussion to disturb the flow of meaning in language. Perhaps there is a world where the word *mum-ma* means the world, for what is a world but an existence of a way of nurturing life?

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