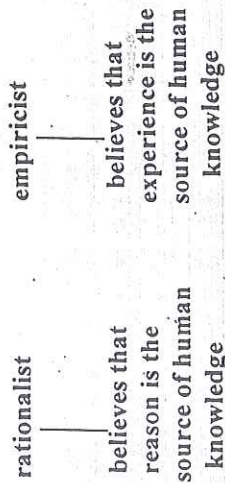


LE BOCAGE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL CHOMSKY 2

Philosophical implications of Chomsky's work raises a dispute between:



↑
Chomsky's work offers support to this view.

The reason is that his analysis of the structure of language leads Chomsky to the view that languages have a surface structure and a deep structure. The apparent difference between all spoken languages are mainly at the surface level whilst the similarities between languages are mainly at the level of deep structure.

But why should this be so?

Empiricist explain it by saying that:

- all human languages make reference to the properties and objects of the physical world which must be perceived in essentially the same way.
- all languages are called upon to fulfil a similar range of functions.
- all languages use the same physiological and psychological apparatus.

BUT this does not explain many of the universal features of language as evidenced in the process by which children learn their native language:

- All children - regardless of parentage - are born with an ability for learning language - all learn the language of their community.

b) All are able to understand and make up an enormous number of sentences never heard before - i.e. creativity is an essential feature of language.

Empiricist theories of language learning cannot bridge the gap between the relatively small number of utterances the child hears and his ability to construct the grammatical rules of language.

Hence, Chomsky suggest that all humans are born with a knowledge of the universal principles governing the structure of human language.

Criticism:

Chomsky's case for rational knowledge rests on the hypotheses that certain principles which underlie the process of sentence construction are universal hence if an artificial language were constructed that violates these principles, then it would not be learned as easily. But - this is an untestable hypothesis. It is impossible to raise a child subjecting him only to an artificial language.

Therefore the universals to which Chomsky refers may not be innate, they may owe this universality to the common origins of human language.

From: Tok notes, Dr DJ Wilkinson (1996)