

WHICH ARE THE DATA THAT COMPETENCE PROVIDES FOR LINGUISTIC INTUITIONS?*

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ABSTRACT

There are two clearly opposed camps on the issue of the source of linguistic intuitions that have been labelled competentialist and ordinarist positions. Competentialists believe and defend the view that linguistic intuitions have a special status and that linguistic competence is their source, while ordinarists believe and defend the view that linguistic intuitions do not have any special status and that they are not directly derived from linguistic competence. The crucial disagreement is primarily over the source of intuitions. The main question that is addressed in this paper is: Which are the data that competence provides for linguistic intuitions? I try to show that all the criticism mounted against the ordinarist are ill-founded. Competence is not the source of linguistic intuitions. Intuitions do not flow directly from competence. They are the secondary (immediate) reflections on primary performance.

Keywords: *linguistic intuitions, competence, central processor, language as skill*

Part I

1. Introduction

There has recently been an ongoing discussion among philosophers about the status and the source of linguistic intuitions. The discussion started at the annual IUC course “Philosophy of linguistics” and most of early contributions on this topic have been originally published in *the Croatian*

*Received: 02.12.2014.

Accepted: 21.01.2015.

Journal of Philosophy.¹ My paper here is envisioned as a long-standing discussion about intuitions with Nenad Mišćević especially since Nenad wrote a contribution on this topic in my *Festschrift*.² Since Nenad's and my beliefs on this issue are opposed this is an appropriate occasion to continue this unfinished discussion.³ Thus the best way to read my paper is as an answer to Nenad's claims and arguments.⁴

There are two clearly opposed camps on the issue of the source of linguistic intuitions and I will label them (after Nenad's suggestion) competentialist (Chomskian) and ordinarist (Devittian) positions. Competentialists believe and defend the view that linguistic intuitions have a special status and that linguistic competence is their source, while ordinarists believe and defend the view that linguistic intuitions do not have any special status and that they are not directly derived from linguistic competence. The crucial disagreement is primarily over **the source of intuitions**. The competentialist's view is that the language faculty is the source. The intuitions are claimed to be, as Devitt likes to

¹ See relevant papers in the References. The discussion from that time has expanded greatly and I will throughout this paper try to refer to a number of some more recent publications relevant for my discussion. Interested reader can look at a rather massive literature on the subject in Schütze and Sprouse (2014), Maynes and Gross (2013), Gibson and Fedorenko (2013), Sprouse and Almeida (2013), Mortensen, K. (web 2013), Devitt (2012, 2013), Rey (2013), Weinberg et. al. (2012), Ludlow (2011), Gross and Culbertson (2011), Fitzgerald (2010), Textor (2009), Culbertson and Gross (2009), Cohnitz & Haggquist (eds). (2009), Wasow & Arnold (2005), Georgi (web 2005), Schütze (1996).

² See Mišćević (2009).

³ I will address Nenad Mišćević by his first name. The reason for my informality is our deep and enduring friendship. Nenad and I met for the first time a long time ago, in 1974 to be precise, at the Faculty of Arts in Zadar. I arrived there a year before Nenad. We both left Zadar, Nenad in 1992, a year before I did. When we first met, a number of young colleagues were newly employed at the faculty; those were the times of lively and engaging intellectual talks and joyful meetings and dinners. I remember that Nenad asked me to come and give a talk to his philosophy students and thus I continued my graduate (side) interest in philosophical issues connected to linguistics. Twenty years have passed from the time we taught in Zadar and we both remember those days with fondness and great nostalgia. Unfortunately, during the civil war in Croatia, which we both spent mostly in the shelter in the university cellars, Nenad's nationalistic-minded colleagues (the leading figure among them was dr. Jure Zovko from Zagreb) practically hounded him out of his post. Life did not treat me better. We both found refuge in Maribor thanks to prof. dr. Bojan Borstner, who at the time was dean of the Pedagogical Faculty and the head of the newly founded philosophy department. Nenad became spiritus movens of all our activities, which are just too numerous to mention. We mostly planned them during our weekly commute from Rijeka to Maribor in my car Leon. Nenad's inexhaustible ideas, concern for his students, ideas for symposia, love for his colleagues, enthusiasm for all things beautiful, and above all his human breath and tolerance found in me, as his colleague and friend, a true follower. This article is written in honour of his 60th birthday with the dedication: Without Whom Nought.

⁴ See Mišćević (2006), (2009), and (2012).

put it: the voice of competence (VoC). The ordinarist rejects this view, arguing that although linguistic competence produces and supplies linguistic data (for example, the sentence: “Ann is beautiful”), it does not supply *information about the data* (Devitt 2008b, 680). In other words linguistic competence produces the data for linguistic intuitions but it does not yield linguistic intuitions themselves. To continue with our example, linguistic competence will produce the sentence “Ann is beautiful” but that same competence will not tell us that this is a proper English sentence. In other words, the informational content of intuitions (this is an OK sentence) does not flow directly from competence (says the ordinarist) but intuitions are “immediate and fairly unreflective empirical central-processor (CP) responses to linguistic phenomena” (Devitt 2006b, 120). Thus while a competentialist believes that the competence to use a language is essentially conjoined with the competence to make intuitive judgments about the language, the ordinarist vehemently rejects this tie, i.e., she claims that competence to use a language is not automatically to be associated with the competence to make intuitive judgments about the language. This is a general but at the same time core statement about the difference between a competentialist and ordinarist and the views have to be presented in more details in order to see who might be/is right.

What I want to do in this article is the following:

1. In Part I, I briefly review some known, but controversial, facts about explanation of linguistic intuitions since I primarily want to concentrate on mostly one question; which is the following:
2. Which are the data that competence provides for linguistic intuitions? Robert Matthews pressed this point at the 2008 Dubrovnik conference and said that the crucial question was: What is the relation of intuition data to competence?⁵
3. I bring out arguments for the ordinarist's view by looking at Nenad's argumentation.
4. In Part II, I offer further answers to Nenad's objections to my view.⁶

So what does competence supply? Although a lot has been said and written on this issue I think it will be helpful to dwell into a more detailed story regarding the matter. I will do this by following and critically responding to Nenad's arguments which he offers in support of the competentialist's view of the source of intuitions.

⁵ The paper was presented in Dubrovnik (2008) as “Linguistic Intuitions and Linguistic Competence”, yet it has not been published.

⁶ See Mišćević (web) Mišćević (2006), (2012) while for the discussion in Part II I refer to Mišćević (2012) which I summarize for the English speaking audience and then give my responses.

2. Setting the scene - Why are linguistic intuitions the evidence?

The standard explanation is that linguistic intuitions are thought to be good evidence for linguistic theory because the speaker derives them from a representation of the rules⁷ of the language, a representation that constitutes the speaker's linguistic competence. The derivation is a causal (and rational) process like a deduction. On this explanation, linguistic competence alone provides information about the linguistic facts; the intuitive judgements are, "the voice of competence" (VoC). The speaker has a privileged access to facts about the language (Devitt 2006b, 96). Competence supplies judgements (intuitions) about the language.⁸

The nonstandard explanation states that the rules are embodied somehow in a speaker without being represented. However, linguists and philosophers that subscribe to this view are still committed to the Cartesian view that intuitions are the voice of competence, i.e., to the view that speakers, simply in virtue of being competent, have information about the linguistic facts (Devitt 2006b, 96).

To reiterate, the *nonstandard explanation* says that linguistic rules are *not represented but embodied in a speaker*. It is very likely that rules that are embodied but not represented govern our other activities like swimming, bicycle riding, running, typing, piano playing, and thinking. The crucial point stressed by the ordinaryist is that there does not seem to be any direct path from any of these embodied rules to relevant beliefs. Why then suppose that there is such a path for linguistic beliefs? Why suppose that we can have privileged access to linguistic facts when we cannot to facts about these other activities? *We do not have the beginnings of a positive answer to these questions and it seems unlikely that the future will bring answers*, claims the ordinaryist (Devitt 2006a, 506-7; 2006b, 118). This fact is very important for the argument that linguistic competence is not

⁷ See the excellent discussion of the possible difference between represented and embodied rules in Pereplyotchik (2011).

⁸ Here is one of the possible quotes: "Unconscious, information-bearing states of the language faculty gives rise to conscious knowledge that is immediately reflected in the speaker's intuitive linguistic judgements" (Smith 2006, 443; also see p. 454). For general discussion about the nature of intuitions in linguistics see Schütze (1996). More on what kind of intuitions are at stake see Devitt (2010b, 836-839). In this respect I do not agree with Nenad's definition of intuitions when he says: "The feeling, the belief-state and the judgment, and sometimes even the report (all of them, or at least some of them) are called 'intuition'; I will reserve the term for the first three of them" (Mišćević on the web but see also 2006, 526, footnote 3 for a more elaborate distinction). This cannot be true since the feeling, belief-state and the judgment as three different things. Intuitions that are at stake here are immediate judgments and the reports of them.

the source of linguistic intuitions.⁹

So is there a path from embodied rules to relevant beliefs? And if there is one what is it? Is the ordinarist right in her claim that linguistic competence gives us data but not the intuitions (judgments) about these data? I now want to look into what has been said about the source, and the data that this source provides, for linguistic intuitions.

3. What data are supplied by linguistic competence?

Within the present discussion one of the competentionalists who has tried to criticise the ordinarist on the issue of the source and data for linguistic intuitions is Nenad Mišćević¹⁰ and since Nenad (2006, 528) has supplied a very useful picture of what might be going on in arguing against the ordinarist. I will use his argumentation and criticisms as a foil for going into more details concerning the question of the source of intuitions. Mišćević has posited the following competentionalist flow-chart in order to show what kind of possible route is involved in arriving at linguistic intuitions.

1	2	3	4
<i>simulation (or some similar exercise akin to normal production)</i>	<i>immediate, spontaneous verdict (intuition core)</i>	<i>empirical testing at sub-personal level</i>	<i>intuition</i>

We have a competent speaker (let us call him Peter) and the question to

⁹ For a dissenting view and some arguments to the contrary see more recently Maynes & Gross who try to show how causal etiology sheds light? on questions of cognitive architecture...”how consciously inaccessible subpersonal processes give rise to conscious states”... (2013, 714). See also Mišćević’s suggestion: “It is not that the answer (of competence) bypasses the central processor, it is rather that the central processor adds nothing substantial. So there is no mystery, no problematic causal route around the central processor or behind its back. The central processor is perhaps the messenger, but the message is written by the competence” (2006, 548). Rey (2113) has so far a most worked out suggestion about structural descriptions being responsible for categorical perception of language and also for intuitions. Devitt (2013) has a long response to that suggestion.

¹⁰ For other exchanges see Fitzgerald (2010); Textor (2009); Pietroski (2008). Also Cohnitz & Haggquist (eds). 2009.

be answered is what is happening during Peter's arriving at his judgment about a particular sentence. Let us say he is judging the sentence: "*Ann is beautiful.*" The real problem is how to characterize and explain what is happening. What is Peter's cognitive apparatus really doing? The competentialist claims that it is mobilizing the particular competence, i.e. the same cognitive (re)source that produces or fails to produce sentences in real-life speaking. It is the competence itself that is doing the work (producing the sentence "Ann is beautiful" and judging that "Ann is beautiful" is an OK sentence), the central processor (stage 3), at best, just passively reports the verdict of the competence (which is the intuition core – immediate spontaneous verdict – OK verdict – occurring at stage 2).

The ordinarist, according to Nenad, has a different answer. The above chart appears as follows:

1	2	3
<i>simulation</i> (or some similar exercise akin to normal production)	<i>CP empirical</i> <i>testing</i> <i>at sub-personal</i> <i>level</i>	<i>intuition</i>

So there is no stage two from the competentialist chart, there is no spontaneous verdict of the competence itself, the so-called intuition core.¹¹ In order to determine who might be/is right, we have to discuss the proposals following the flow-chart(s) stage by stage. I will mainly concentrate on stage 1 and the transition to stage 2. The crucial questions have to be resolved right at these stages.

Let us say that both competentialist and ordinarist agree that competence involves at least embodied and non-represented rules, and operates according to them. The crucial question is: **What are the data?** The sense of data here is the same as in primary linguistic data (pld). So the data provided by competence are linguistic expressions (and the experience of using them) and *not* any observational beliefs about those expressions, says the ordinarist.

Let me call this a **datum-stage** in the process of producing linguistic intuitions. Nenad, supporting competentialist's views, put forward a

¹¹ Devitt (in correspondence) does not agree that CP testing (stage 2 in ordinarist's chart) is on the subpersonal level. He says: "I don't know quite what Nenad has in mind in 2 and doubt that it is part of my view. The only relevant thing going on at the subpersonal level is the processing."

number of criticisms of ordinarist's approach to data. I will look at most of those suggestions and criticisms and try to show that they are not successful.

1. To start with it is *not* true that competentialist and ordinarist are in agreement that the immediate answer of the competence is a datum for the central processor (CP).¹² *Whether the answer is the datum is exactly what is in question.* There is no immediate answer of the competence (answer being stage 2 in the competentialist flow-chart), says the ordinarist. The answer is not the datum. The answer is part of the central-processor reflection on the datum (answer being stage 2 in the ordinarist flow-chart). We can take it as agreed by both sides that the first stage is a normal production of the sentence, i.e. the actual linguistic production (primary linguistic data -pld) by the competence, but then Nenad adds that the sentence is being rehearsed and *analyzed* by Ann's competence (italics mine), which is not accepted by the ordinarist.¹³ In other words, Nenad is claiming that competence presumably comes out with some kind of answer, some Yes or No signal about the sentence, and he argues that this is the most important element, the core, of the final intuition. However, to repeat, what is agreed upon by both sides (competentialist's and ordinarist's) is only that the first state/step is a linguistic production. The doubtful part in Nenad's interpretation is "... and *analyzed* by Ann's competence." Obviously the parser in the competence has to "make decisions," that is analyze in order to come out with a sentence that linguist usually presents in a tree-like diagram but that does NOT mean that the competence comes out "with some kind of answer, some yes or no signal" *about* the sentence. The nature of the parser is to go through the analysis and in doing this it has to "make decisions" in order to produce a sentence. There is no core (YES or NO) of the final intuition in this processing and production of strings done by the competence in the stage no. 1 as indicated on both charts.

2. So what is the datum? The normal production is the datum, says the ordinarist. Normal production of an actual linguistic expression is number one on both flow charts. Ordinarist supports (for competentialist's an extreme) view that there is no answer at this stage, that competence just produces the sentence proposed, say "*Visiting relatives can be boring,*" or in our example "*Ann is beautiful*". Competentialist objects and says that this won't suffice since this is not new datum at all. But why should there be new datum? If there is no simulation, there is no new datum, just the datum presented. The normal production gives/is the datum, i.e. the

¹² Nenad says: "We also agree that the immediate answer is a datum for CP" (2009, 5) (italics mine).

¹³ Rehearsing, or what Nenad also calls simulation or tentative production, is not necessary though. See Devitt's detailed and important discussion on this point in this issue.

datum is the output of language competence. In other words, the basic data for the linguist are that our speaker says such-and-such and means such-and-such by the given expression. There is no need for new datum. The datum, metaphorically speaking, “does not speak”, says the ordinarist, while the competentialist thinks that the datum “does speak” in the sense that the datum is already the intuition. In other words, for a competentialist intuition comes with the datum. I suppose this is why the competentialist thinks that there has to be a new datum (in stage 1).

The main hero for the ordinarist¹⁴ is the central processing unit. CP has access to the resulting output of a particular competence so, it does some reflection about the output, i.e., about the data provided by the competence. CP appeals to empirical evidence, the data, says the ordinarist. So it is not true, as competentialist claims, that production itself yields the verdict (for example: “the sentence is not O.K., “the sentence is not to be said” or “the sentence is ambiguous”). It is the central processor that yields that verdict (and it decides: “I would not say this” or “the sentence is ambiguous”), claims the ordinarist. Thus I also do not agree with the following passage in Nenad’s characterization:

So, how are Ann’s and John’s cognitive apparatuses arriving to the verdict? Following the lead from the Chomskian tradition, I would claim that it is mobilizing the particular competence, i.e. the same cognitive resource that produces or fails to produce similar sentences in real-life speaking. It is the competence itself that is doing the work, the central processor at best just passively reports the verdict of the competence, which is the intuition. Dunja, together with Devitt, would claim that Ann’s and John’s apparatuses are mobilizing the cognitive resource that *is normally in charge of understanding sentences*”(emphasis mine) (2006, 528).

My objection is that intuitions in the ordinarist view *are not* the same as the understanding of a sentence. The understanding of a sentence is part of competence, not part of the judgment in intuitions.¹⁵ When the ordinarist claims that the production of the datum does not say anything, she means that it does not say anything more than mere production of the linguistic string. Thus the competence does not supply the meta-linguistic *information* in the intuition.

¹⁴ Nenad invented a rather amusing rhyme: “For the ordinarist, competence is mere impotence and the real professor is the central processor.”

¹⁵ Thus in the same vein Fitzgerald insists: “We can’t help but hear the sounds of our language as structured and meaningful hearing a sentence” (2010,148). One cannot but agree that this is true because linguistic competence mandates the way we hear sounds; whether it mandates our intuitions is a different question! And the ordinarist denies this. That it mandates our intuitions cannot be taken for granted since this is the core of the issue. See Devitt 2010a: 854-855.

3. Another possible answer of what the datum might be has been put forward by the ordinarist.¹⁶ The datum is the experience that the answer is about. The experience, as made clear by the context, is the neural-verbal behavior of producing or trying to produce the target string (Devitt 2006c, 594). Firstly, objects the competentialist, subpersonal experiences hopefully don't have qualitative character, so the experience of producing the string is just the very producing. This seems a good objection if experience is taken to mean the experience of undergoing something (like experience of being in pain, or being in love). But experience here can (and should) be taken simply as going through the motion (experience) of producing and understanding sentences. It is like an experience analogous to the perceptual experience of hearing someone say something. In the case of linguistic competence it is the experience of "saying it to oneself". This is what the ordinarist means when he says that there is just trying to say the sentence or string under examination, which deploys just the competence and then there is reflection. Experience of being competent is the evidence, i.e. data. So there is no talk about qualitative character of experiences at the subpersonal level.¹⁷

4. The competentialist continues with his criticism: Suppose competence thus produces the string, and the CP takes this producing as its datum; it is almost like CP watching the competence producing the string. The ordinarist's reply to this interpretation is that CP cannot be watching the producing of the strings since CP has access only to the result of this production. So CP simply looks and passes judgement on the produced string.

5. Another question that Nenad asks is: But what kind of information can *this* (i.e. watching the production) give to the CP? This is, however, a wrong question to ask because the ordinarist claims that competence does not give information. If it does not give information it is not appropriate to ask what kind of information it gives!

6. The further criticism of the competentialist is that linguistic rules are embodied in the competence, and not in the CP. CP is not a dedicated linguistic processor, but an all-purpose machine. So, mere following the toils of competence does not tell CP much. The answer of the ordinarist is: Of course not since CP, to start with, is not following the so-called toils of competence. CP has access to the results of those "toils" and then it reflects on them. Furthermore, and more importantly, CP is not passing

¹⁶ See Devitt's answer to Nenad's criticism in Devitt 2006c, 594, fn. 22. This was given in the context of discussing the question whether person's answer to the linguist's question is the datum. See Devitt within this issue, too.

¹⁷ Devitt (in correspondence) is not fully supportive of my argument here. He says: "Don't know about that. Isn't there a qualitative character to all experience? E.g. to looking at green grass or white snow?" See also Devitt's answer (in this issue) to Nenad concerning this point.

intuitional judgements about possible linguistic procedural rules but simply “looking” at linguistic strings or sentences and then judging.

7. The competentialist goes on and says “the competence has, or rather consists of procedural rules, so only *it* can decide whether the target string is acceptable” (Mišćević 2009 web). Surely, competence would not be competence if it did not produce the target string. It consists of embodied procedural rules. The whole point is that competence produces the well-formed (or sometimes ill-formed) sentences, but the answer to the question: “Is this a well-formed string” is not given by the competence. Competence produces that string but does not pass a judgement about the well-formedness of the strings. The linguistic job is done by the competence. It gives, in Nenad’s favored words, “red or green light” to the (intuitive) *production* of the string but not *the judgment about* the string. This is exactly what the ordinarist is pointing out when he/she says that competence does not have a voice.¹⁸

4. Is language a cognitive skill?

A very important presupposition for the argument that intuitions in linguistics do not have a special status and are not derived from linguistic competence is the belief that language is a cognitive skill. and that there is a strict parallelism between some other kinds of skills and the linguistic skill. The ordinarist says that there is this parallelism and the competentialist has two reactions: Either 1. Language is not a skill, it is not an ability, not simply knowledge-how but it involves knowledge-that. Or 2. If he accepts that language is a skill he believes that this kind of skill has a special status. In other words, language is *not* like other skills. Thus if the competentialist subscribes to the view that language is a skill (as Nenad does) then he believes that language is a special skill not similar to other skills. I will say a little bit more about this issue because it is immediately relevant for the issue in question, i.e., question about the source of linguistic intuitions.

Why should one think that linguistic competence is just a skill or ability? Concisely, according to the ordinarist, it is because it has all the marks of one: it has limited plasticity; it is extraordinarily fast; the process of exercising it is unavailable to consciousness; once established, it is “automatic” with the result that it can be performed whilst attention is elsewhere (Devitt 2006b, 209-10). Why shouldn’t we suppose that in the case of linguistic competence, the skill involves knowledge-that? The argument that Devitt gives in a number of places¹⁹ is that we should not

¹⁸ See answer to the point no.1, p.... and also see further discussion in section 4. Also the important distinction between intuitions and other linguistic usage in Devitt (2006b).

¹⁹ See for example Devitt (2010a).

suppose this unless we have some powerful reasons for doing so. Otherwise the supposition seems gratuitous, and I fully agree.²⁰ Why suppose that simply in virtue of being competent in a language a person must have propositional knowledge about the language? Furthermore, and relevant for linguistic intuitions, why suppose that speakers have this sort of “Cartesian” access to linguistic facts? Why not suppose, rather, the modest view that any knowledge of these facts that a speaker may have comes from ordinary empirical reflection on linguistic phenomena?

The ordinarist presses the point about parallelism between skills and the language capacity taken as a skill. Studying and explaining the nature of linguistic competence should be the same as investigating the competence, for example, to play chess, to touch type or the competence to think. The same kind of parallelism applies to the investigation and explanation of linguistic intuitions. In the cases of intuitions about touch typing, chess moves, and logical thought, a person can find data to have intuitions about without going out and looking because her competence produces relevant data. The ordinarist (rightfully) points out that linguistic intuitions are not somehow unique in comparison to these other intuitions just mentioned. On the other hand, the crucial thought of a competentialist is that a speaker’s linguistic intuitions *are* different not only from the intuitions that we have about worldly things (like intuitions about mountains, or stones, or cats) but linguistic intuitions are also different from the intuitions about other human skills that are the inner products, the products of the person’s own competence, like thinking, and let me add running, or piano playing. I want to show that competentialist is wrong regarding this point, too. I will try to show that there is there is parallelism between human skills like touch typing, piano playing and language skill. The competentialist denies this. The parallelism does not hold, he says. I quote: “With skills, there is something to be said for the flow-chart proposed. (Ordinarist) has a / good/ point here.²¹ Take touch typing. The immediate product of the first stage is a real (or imagined) movement of fingers. The movement itself is not an intuition. In the language case, *the immediate product is already a judgment*, so it is a candidate for being an intuition. And its content can be literally preserved all the way to the end of the process (stage no. 4). It is as simple as that” (Nenad 2006, 529, italics in the original).

But simply asserting that the immediate product of linguistic competence is a judgment does not make it into one! On the contrary a production of a sentence (stage 1 on the flow-charts) is much akin to a tentative movement of fingers of the touch typist, or for that matter, of a piano

²⁰ See Jutronic (1994).

²¹ The flow chart is ordinarist’s flow chart. Nenad says: “Let me note that the case of skills and the typist example are intermediary between studying completely mind-independent items (like dogs) and studying once own inner production(s)” (2006, 531).

player or runner's positioning of her legs and body. The speaker produces the sentence just as a piano player hits the white and black keys and as a runner moves her legs. Just as the competent pianist's movements of her fingers is not simultaneously the judgement of the same movements so the production of a sentence by a competent speaker is not simultaneously the judgement of this production. Furthermore there is also a similarity in their awareness upon reflection. A speaker is aware of (recognizes) a correct or incorrect sentence just as much as a piano player is aware of (recognizes) the production of a correct or incorrect tone (note) or a runner of a good or bad positioning of her feet and body. I do not see any crucial difference at all. In case of piano playing or running the datum is how a pianist plays or how a runner runs. In case of linguistic competence it is how a speaker speaks.

Moreover, the belief that the immediate product of the first stage is a real (or imagined) movement of fingers in the case of touch typing but it is not in the case of the production of a sentence is the result of a confusion, the result of posing a wrong question. Let me explain: Nenad approvingly speaks about ordinarist's flow chart for motor skills (in this case of typing skill). There is no analogy for linguistic skills, he claims. It is true, he says, that intuitive judgments about touch typing provides a nice example of reflecting on the output of one's own competence. As Devitt has described it: "Ask a touch typist whether a 'k' should be typed with a middle finger and, very likely, he will think to himself, "How would I type a 'k'?" He will attend as he goes through the actual or mental motions of doing so and respond immediately, "Yes." (2006b, 107). The only datum here, ordinarist says, is "how he, a good touch typist, types." So, by going through the movement, the typist secures the information for his CP: that it is the middle finger that has to be moved. So the datum is something like: middle-finger-move. The competentialist alerts us to notice the role of the datum: it basically answers the question whether a 'k' should be typed with a middle finger. (The CP has only to translate it into a suitable natural language formulation). If we want to take the analogy seriously, says competentialist, we should ask in the linguistic example: which datum fixes the answer concerning the well-formedness of "They want to be teacher"? The only datum that can do this has to be a 'yes' or a 'no'. To put it slightly more technically: "The question to the typist has the form of "whether we ϕ ?" and the answering datum is producing and instance of ϕ -ing itself. The question put to Ann has the form: Is S correct?, and the answering datum has to contain the answer, i.e. a 'yes' or a 'no'. The question "Is S correct?" cannot be answered by merely reproducing S. The analogy thus speaks in favor of the view according to which the competence provides the core datum, the essential, central part of the intuition to be produced" (Nenad 2009, web).

But the analogy as presented by the competentialist does not hold because the question posed to the typist is: "How should we type (touch-

-type) a ‘k’?” and the question posed to Ann is: “Is S correct?” Questions are not equivalent! They are two different *kinds* of questions. In other words, the question to the typist is about the performance and the question to Ann is about correctness. Let us take a piano player. You can ask her how she plays and you can ask her about the correctness of her playing. These are two different questions. My claim is that the answer to the same kind of question would give the *same kind* of answer. The datum for the typist would be a move of the middle-finger, the datum for a pianist would be maybe playing a scale and the datum for the speaker would be producing a sentence. The intuition/judgement whether any of this is correct would not come from the datum but from the answer to the datum: The typist would say: Yes, it has to be the middle finger, the pianist would say: Yes, the scale has to be played in this way and the speaker would say: Yes, the sentence is good. Or put slightly differently to bring out the analogy, one has to ask the following questions: “Is it correct to type a ‘k’ with the middle finger?”; “Is it correct to say S?” The data here are: action of typing ‘k’; action of saying S, playing the scale. Intuitive judgement is arrived at in each case by reflecting on such data. Thus there is no disanalogy between linguistic and motor skills, nor the disanalogy of the relevant intuitions. Competentialist is in the wrong.

In sum, all the objections boil down to the wrong conclusion that competence is doing something and deciding about its own doings at the same time. For example, if competence produced a correct string it also says: Look this is a correct string! In other words, competence produces its own data and passes a judgement on them. The ordinarist denies this in his claim that “(s)omeone who has the relevant competence has ready access to a great deal of data that are to be explained. She does not have to go out and look for data because her competence produces them” (Devitt 2010, 253). But that does not mean that her passing judgements or making conclusions “flows” from her own production. When a piano player plays she does not at the same time judges her performance. To exaggerate a bit, it is after the performance that she contemplates which were good or bad notes, phrasing, etc. If she were judging while performing, she would very likely fail to perform.

The competentionalist, on the other hand, claims that competence is producing the language (speaking and understanding) and also telling us something *about* the language. But these two things are different things and this is the main claim of the ordinarist. Often these judgments will be immediate and unreflective enough to count as intuitions. Even when they do count, they are still laden with such background “theory” she acquired in getting her concept of grammaticality.²² But nevertheless, very importantly, “the grammatical (...) options that feature in these

²² See Devitt (2006b, 109-10). On the issue of grammaticality and acceptability see the discussion in Culbertson & Gross (2009), Gross & Culbertson (2011).

judgments are not supplied by the competence but by the central processor as a *result of thought about language*" (Devitt 2006b, 110 -11). The same with the piano player and/or with the runner in their respective intuitive judgements. There is no difference, thus the competentialist loses.

5. Conclusion to Part I

One of the main contentions between a competentialist and an ordinarist is about the issue of what competence supplies. Competence is a state, and as a state it does not give us conclusion about that state, says the ordinarist. The data are in the competence but the conclusions *about the data* do not flow from the competence itself. In other words, information *about it is not in it*. Competence produces language, says the ordinarist, it gives us more, says the competentialist.

Psychologists talking about linguistic intuitions say: "It is obvious that intuitive judgements are metalinguistic judgements. The object of a judgement of grammaticality such as *the sentence "John lives in town" is good English* is a linguistic object (*the sentence S*), and the judgement is made on it as a linguistic object" (Levelt 1974, 8). It is as simple as that. Or more to the point: "...the linguist or informant who considers the grammaticality of a sentence tries to imagine an actual situation of "primary" performance in order to decide whether the sentence "could be said", i. e. is grammatical. Intuitions would then be secondary reflections of primary performance" (Levelt 1972, 22). Levelt also points out that "there is a complete absence of arguments in the literature in favor of the thesis that linguistic intuitions reveal the underlying linguistic competence" (1972, 23), and thus stressing that, contrary to the competentialist's belief, intuitions do not flow directly from competence. One could go on citing but this should suffice.²³ The fact that the output of competence are sentences, and intuitions are judgements made on those sentences is exactly what psychologists and ordinarists claim. Competentialist is wrong because "linguistic intuiting is a kind of behavior, rather than a clairvoyant window on linguistic competence" (Levelt 1972, 33).

²³ One more quote from Levelt et al. : "Linguistic intuitions became the royal way into an understanding of the competence which underlies all linguistic performance. However, if such a linguistic competence exists at all, i.e.. some relatively autonomous mental capacity for language, linguistic intuitions seem to be the least obvious data on which to base the study of its structure. They are derived and are rather artificial psycholinguistic phenomena which develop late in language acquisition . . . and are very dependent on explicit teaching and instruction. They cannot be compared with primary language use such as speaking and listening (italics mine). The empirical domain of Chomskian linguistics is linguistic intuitions. The relation between these intuitions and man's capacity for language, however, is highly obscure" (1977, 89).

Part II

1. Introduction

My discussion with Nenad as just presented was published in the Croatian version of the book dedicated to Nenad's work as a philosopher.²⁴ Nenad responded to all those who participated in the volume, myself included, and in his reply gave additional support to his view about the source of linguistic intuitions. I summarize his arguments and present my additional answers to his criticisms. I again try to show that additional arguments are ill-placed.

In support to his view of intuitions as "spokesperson of competence" Nenad offers a colorful comparison. I summarize what he argues for: Intuition transfers the information that is in competence just as a spokesperson does, often interpreting a bit the information or adapting it for some present interest. Intuition is a voice of competence just as the spokesperson of, for example, Police department is "the voice" by which the department addresses its citizens. The behavior and the words of policemen present the department's policies, just as our ordinary language practice, and language corpus, indicate the functioning of the competence. But the spokesperson's statements (announcements) are often more direct, easier and more reliable way to what some department's policies are than the behavior of individual policemen. The same way intuitions are a shortcut to the functioning of competence (2012, 194).²⁵

My answer is the following: Spokesperson indicates how the office functions. It does not pass judgments on the workings or decision of the office. Thus this is an invalid comparison because all it shows is how office (equaling competence) functions not how judgements follow from the office (competence). In Nenad's own words: Intuitions are a shortcut to the *functioning* of competence. But pure functioning of competence is not in question. The question (to repeat) is: Does competence give us judgements about its own workings? Now, as it was stressed in the first part of this paper, the nature of the parser is to go through the analysis and in doing this it has to "make decisions" in order to come out with a sentence, but that does not entail that is coming out with the intuition *about* the sentence. The same way the spokesperson is not commenting on the police reports, she is just passing them on – showing how the police functions. Thus contrary to Nenad's claim his own comparison supports

²⁴ See Prijic-Samaržija & Bojanić (2012).

²⁵ "Intuition is not part of competence (just as spokesperson of some body (office) is usually not a part of that body) but intuition transfers the information that is in competence" (Mišćević 2012,194).

ordinarist's and not competitionalist's view of the functioning of linguistic competence (police department)!

Nenad continues: Imagine now that we have something very similar concerning our most general way we cope with objects and events (also our movement in space in relation to time dimension). In such cases our general ontological (geometric and temporal) intuitions will also be spokespersons of those abilities that enable us to cope in such a way in the world (2012, 194).

I think that comparison with geometric and temporal intuitions is worse than the previous one just presented. Nenad does not have a good analogy here, either. Think of our movement in space, or coping with objects and events. We walk, bicycle, swim, run. All of these acts are governed by embodied rules that amount to our competencies in these activities. Yet, in fact, these competencies do not provide us with much in the way of reliable intuitions at all. In other words, rules that are embodied but not represented govern our swimming, bicycle riding, running, typing, piano playing (or our way of coping with objects, or movement in space).²⁶ We are coping in a certain way in the world, this is how we are functioning - and our intuitions *about* this functioning do not come from pure functioning itself. The crucial point stressed by the ordinarist is that there does not seem to be any direct path from any of these embodied rules to relevant judgements of beliefs. Therefore, the question that has to be answered is: What could possibly be a direct route from these embodied rules to the intuitions?

In other words:

1. Is there a path from embodied rules to relevant beliefs?
2. If there is one what is it?²⁷

7. Two arguments against the ordinarist

In his answers Nenad presents two arguments against my view. He labels the arguments: 1. *Argument from pure production* and 2. *Argument from interpretation*.

²⁶ See section 4 in Part I of this article.

²⁷ See footnote 9. More recently Maynes says: "I have left the mechanism by which the language faculty (or whatever it is that a linguist is studying) causes meta-linguistics judgments mysterious, and Devitt is right that merely noting that there is some story to tell is insufficient" (2012,13). However Maynes tries to solve the problem with the suggestion that intuitions can be calibrated. But see Weinberg et. al. (2012) and their dim view of calibration of intuitions. They say in conclusion: "The first bad news is that calibration cannot at present help philosophers respond to the growing challenges to intuition-based methods." See Rey's attempt (2013).

1. *Argument from pure production*

Back to the essential question: Is competence the source of information which is the basis of intuitions? Here Nenad offers an additional interesting comparison in support of his view of the workings of competence. This is what I call “litmus comparison” where Nenad argues for the following: Let us see how we would react in simple cases, for example, in the case of ordinary litmus. Imagine two situations. In the first, minimal one, we have litmus paper. I dip it into the liquid and it displays red color. Question: Did the litmus provide the information? The commonsense answer is positive. Information about redness travelled from litmus to my eye to the back part of my brain and then further on. Of course, the direct information is only about redness.²⁸ The fact that the liquid is acid is a further point, it is my own interpretation. Dunja would have to claim here that the litmus does not give information. The data is in it but the information is not. But what is data that is transferred if not information? (Mišćević 2012, 194-195)

Let us ask ourselves: What is the purpose (job) of litmus? How does litmus function? The job of litmus is to show color (red) just as the job of competence is to produce sentences (the language usage). Thus Nenad begs the question to suppose its job is more than that. The so-called information that Nenad mentions in litmus case is simply the mere workings of litmus just as the so-called information of competence is to produce sentences. Just as you cannot but hear the words of your language in the same way you cannot but see red in the case of litmus.

The second situation presented by Nenad is the following: We have an instrument that reads off the color of the litmus. If the color is red *if* spits out the info ACID, if blue then ALCALINE, if violet NEUTRAL. This instrument gives the information which is probably comparable to language intuitions. Maybe the linguistic ability just gives the minimal answers like ACCEPTANCE/NOT ACCEPTANCE of the given sentence. The rest is happening in the subsequent stage and includes some kind of reader/interpreter (2012, 195).

But was not the first case (the litmus showing the red color) presented above the case of the intuition in Nenad's sense!? Or this is what Nenad calls “intuition core” (in his chart on p. 6). Now the second mention of intuitions must be something additional?

The instrument-reader is interpretation (in Nenad's chart labelled intuition). In the case of ordinary this instrument is like central processor and it delivers information (acceptance, non-acceptance, ambiguity, etc.).

²⁸ Could it not actually be that we simply perceive its redness. However it is an instrument that informs us that the liquid is an acid. I own this comment to Devitt in correspondence.

It is the central processor that is analogous to instrument in yielding information (acid, alkaline, neutral). It can be seen as an instrument for detecting grammatical properties; in litmus' case for chemical properties.

Nenad insists: But would we not say in the presented case that the main source of information is litmus? Litmus "recognises" the content of the liquid; the rest is the interpretation. Analogously if somebody told you: The message is the voice of litmus, would you understand and also accept the metaphor? (2012, 195)

My comment is: No, there is a confusion here between data and information, or if you want to put it differently between *data and the conclusion from the data*. The litmus responds to the liquid (datum) by signaling acid (conclusion from the datum); we respond to a linguistic string (datum) by signaling acceptable/grammatical (conclusion from the datum). And once again, the litmus's job is to react to the liquid (this is data). If it did not react it would not be litmus. Thus the competence would not be competence if it did not have its role in producing (and understanding) of sentences. I conclude that one can accept the metaphor but one has to interpret it the right way.

Nenad further continues: Let us assume that the person successfully *produces the sentence*. Is not that success like the information about the color of litmus? My answer is: Yes, sure it is—but this is part of the *production*—either of litmus or of competence—which does not carry with it any judgement! It is primary performance in anybody's view. "If the sentence is successfully used in primary use, says Nenad, then it is probably all right (probably because mistakes are possible but that is not in question). Intuition comes later" (2012, 195). But it was just claimed that intuitions come with production and now it is claimed that they come later! Something has gone wrong with the comparison with litmus! It seems that the argument now presented by Nenad is ordinarist's and not competentialist's argument! Turning red is in some way like producing a sentence. The additional instrument would be a window into the reaction of litmus because the instrument (to keep the story going) is reflecting the doings of the litmus just like the central processor is reflecting upon the use of the sentence (but this is all happening in stage 2 in ordinarist's chart).

Nenad asks again: "But is it not true that the primary use carries primary information about the fact that the sentence is OK? And does not that information flow (come) from competence?" (2012, 195) My answer is : No, it does not. *Whether competence says sentence is OK is the question under discussion!* There is a lot of "intuitive" processing in sentence production, of what Levelt calls "primary performance" but the reflection that sentence is OK is not part of primary performance. Primary performance is just what the words say: *performance* and thus not the conclusion *about* the performance. Nenad has not proved his point.

2. Argument from interpretation

A competentialist compared (Nenad in conversation and now in writing) the state of competence to a photo. A photo gives us data but it also gives us conclusions from the data at the same time, says the competentialist.

For example, if the photo in the newspapers depicts two middle-aged men touching a rather young girl these are the data. But there is immediate information that the photo carries with those data (i.e. conclusion from the data), says the competentialist, the photo also reveals that the two men must be pedophiles. The same goes for competence. It gives us data and information (conclusion) about the data at the same time (the sentence is OK).

But the presented interpretation and the conclusion about the photo cannot be true because the scene (the data) can be given many interpretations and these interpretations are not given in the data. Thus the so-called information is actually a reflection on the data. That the men are pedophiles is the conclusion. But they could be a gay couple who have just adopted a child and want to show their affection. In other words, there could be different conclusions of the data. Even if we would accept that the data and the information are in the photo (or in the competence) the information *about* the photo or *about* competence is not *in* the photo or *in* the competence. The argument is wrong-headed because it confuses the object of the talk with the talk about the object.

But Nenad insists: “I stay with my proposed example, it is good that Dunja brought it up. Let us suppose that this is really a case of a pair of pedophiles. *Then the photo is the main source of information.*” (2012, 196). My immediate comment is that we are here at the stage when we are trying to decide if that *is* the case. Thus Nenad is presupposing that the two men are pedophiles and he should not.²⁹

The second argument from interpretation refers to my own research. Nenad says the following: When Dunja questions the inhabitants from Split about their dialect, she starts with their “intuitions” (2012, 197). To start with: I do not, I definitely do not! One of the leading ideas in sociolinguistics is the advice and firm belief not to use intuitions since they are very often false and unreliable.³⁰

²⁹ A side remark: The comparison between a photo and language competence might be quite disanalogous! A photo is a representation not an ability! Could one learn much from this comparison at all? The examples with runners or piano players are much more telling but Nenad did not comment on them.

³⁰ See Labov on intuitions (1996). I use the corpus which I did in my book on Split vernacular (2010), partly written corpus, but also recordings of spontaneous speech.

Indeed my work (and sociolinguistic investigations in general) stresses *usage* as prime evidence and not intuitions. My work (and any sociolinguist's research) is an example of how we can get away from relying on intuitions. So what have I tested in my investigation of Split vernacular today? Not intuitions of older and younger people from Split as Nenad says but the usage, i.e. the use of the dialect by different generations in the attempt to find out what is left of the dialect among the youngest generation. To quote one of the more recent statements by sociolinguist Taliagmore concerning methodology: "Therefore, instead of asking the question: "How do you say X?" as a linguist might, a sociolinguist is more likely not to ask a question at all. The sociolinguist will just let you talk about whatever you want to talk about and listen for all the ways you say X" (2005, 5).

However even if I did test the intuitions of Split inhabitants, this would be irrelevant for the present topic which is not about the use of intuitions but about the *source* of intuitions, a totally different question. In other words, the question is: Is the source of Stipe's intuitions that one should say "bija san" ("I was" instead of standard Croatian "bio sam") a reflection on his own usage or did his competence tell him that directly. I would say (if I asked him) that he reflected on his own usage and this is exactly what the ordinarist is claiming. His answer did not flow from his competence but from the fast judgment coming out as a result of the central processing device (CP).

Let us look at Nenad's chart again:

1	2	3	4
<i>simulation (or some similar exercise akin to normal production)</i>	<i>immediate, spontaneous verdict (intuition core)</i>	<i>empirical testing at sub-personal level</i>	<i>intuition</i>

Nenad says: This is why in my scheme that Dunja kindly offers I left the space in 3. In stage 3 something came from outside, for example, the influence of school. The window into the intuitions became blurred.

I said something about this chart in the first part of this article but now I think I have some additional comments to give. First how do we have empirical testing at a sub-personal level? All that was mentioned above about Stipe and family seems very much on the personal level, "the influence of school", etc. But then if that is true how do we have intuition

in stage 4. Intuition as described here seems conscious reflections affected by outside interference. Nenad actually explains saying that if he is right what we are left with is the claim in stage 2, intuition core which is simply kept stable up to the so-called (misnamed) intuition. I think this is actually how Nenad sees it, the intuitional spontaneous verdict (yes or no) is the main and only voice of competence. I think it might be wise to change the labels in stage 3 and 4.³¹

3. Conclusion

In conclusion to his answers Nenad poses a question: “Why is all this important for the philosophical methodology?” (2012, 198). I summarize his answer: Because we can in a very similar way explain variations in philosophical intuitions. Suppose you question people about the ship of Theseus: which of the two present ships, one which is still in function, let us call it presently functioning or the reconstructed one is identical with the original ship? Most of the people say, one presently in function. But the art historian chooses the reconstructed. If you slowly redo the old church in which the service is still held, this for us is not the same building. If, after bombardment, you take the broken remains and build the building with the original stones then it is the same building. This is how it was done from Zadar to Freiburg and nobody talks about the disappearance of old buildings. The same holds for the ship. Ship in function made from the totally new material is not one that was originally there while the reconstructed ship is.

Nenad continues: Thus we can say the following: the opinion of the majority in favor of the presently floating ship reflects our deep understanding of the identity of the material objects through time. The intuition of the art historian is infected with specific interest of the art historians just as in our second example the intuition of the young one from Split is infected with the influence of school (2012, 198).

True indeed but it does not help in solving the problem discussed – what is the source of intuitions? In the case of common folk (any human in general) the intuition can partly come from innate predisposition (created empirically through ages of humankind) or through intuitive reflection on their own experience. The intuitions of art historians have the *same* source as common folk but they also have additional intuitions, obviously “infected” by education. Nenad’s argument only shows that art historians are better indicators in judging historical buildings and people is less reliable, just as folk is in judging the grammaticality of sentences is less reliable than linguists are.

³¹ See Devitt’s comments (this issue) on the first stage of the chart, i. e. on simulation.

In conclusion, Nenad has not convinced me in any of his comparisons and analogies. I stay with Timothy Williamson (2007) who believes that what are called 'intuitions' in philosophy are just applications of our ordinary capacities for judgement. The same can be said of language intuitions. Or with Jaakko Hintikka when he says: "What I am against are the reifications and mystifications surrounding both philosophers' and laymen's ideas about intuitions.... They do not carry any automatic justification with them, no matter how convincing they may be subjectively. All told, the unavoidably unconscious nature of intuitions is nothing but a pernicious myth we should get rid of." (1999, 146).*

* This is a much elaborated (and hopefully improved) version of the original paper delivered at the IUC Philosophy of linguistic conference in 2009 and at a number of meetings of analytical philosophy group in Maribor. My thanks to all the participants at the conference and my dear colleagues in Maribor. I am specially grateful to Michael Devitt who read the final version of this paper and pointed to unclarities and gave useful suggestions. If it were not for endless discussions with Nenad (mostly during our weekly trips to Maribor) this paper would never have seen the light. So all the glory to him!

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