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ABSTRACT

Whither Experimental Semantics?

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The main goal of the paper is to propose a methodology for the theory of reference in which experiments feature prominently. These experiments should primarily test linguistic usage rather than the folk's referential intuitions. The proposed methodology urges the use of: (A) philosophers' referential intuitions, both informally and, occasionally, scientifically gathered; (B) the corpus, both informally and scientifically gathered; (C) elicited production; and, occasionally, (D) folk's referential intuitions. The most novel part of this is (C) and that is where most of the experimental work should be. The secondary goal of the paper is to defend my earlier paper "Experimental Semantics" from the criticisms of Machery, Mallon, Nichols, and Stich in "If Folk Intuitions Vary, Then What?" They charge that I have seriously misunderstood their goal in "Semantics, Cross-Cultural Style" and that many of my arguments are "largely irrelevant". I argue that these charges are baseless.

KEY WORDS: methodology, experiments, reference, linguistic intuitions, linguistic usage, corpus, Kripke, Machery, Mallon, Nichols, and Stich