

## **Biolinguistics — An Orientation**

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In a nutshell, 'biolinguistics' is concerned with exploring the biological foundations of language (piggy-backing on the book title of Lenneberg 1967). This may mean different things to different linguists, and even to different scientists from different disciplines.

The goal of this talk is to bring the biolinguistic program closer by exploring the ontological foundations of biolinguistics and opening up the nutshell a little. The centerpiece of the presentation will be a comprehensive discussion of Chomsky's (1986) 'five big questions', thereby putting the notion of 'knowledge of language' in its historico-philosophical and modern scientific perspective. Thus equipped with the reasoning behind the 'generative enterprise', the relationship between Chomsky's 'five big questions' and Tinbergen's (1963) characterization of the aims and methods of ethology will be discussed. The final part of the talk surveys six decades of research into the faculty of language and brings some pertinent questions concerning the nature of Universal Grammar to the forefront which ultimately lead to present-day research concerns.

This lecture will be directed at anyone interested in learning more about 'biolinguistics', about the rationale behind 'generative grammar', about the distinction of 'linguistics vs. languistics', and related issues presupposing neither a deep knowledge base nor a strong belief in any of these topics — *before* the talk.

Interested participants are warmly invited to download for free our editorial to the inaugural issue of the journal, 'The *Biolinguistics* Manifesto', from:

<http://www.biolinguistics.eu/index.php/biolinguistics/article/view/26/1>

**Kleanthes K. Grohmann** is Associate Professor of Biolinguistics in the Department of English Studies at the University of Cyprus. He is founding co-editor of the open-access journal *Biolinguistics* (since 2007), co-editor of the *Cambridge Handbook of Biolinguistics* (2013), co-author of the textbook *Understanding Minimalism* (2005), and (co-)editor of a number of other volumes, as well as (co-)author of many published journal articles and book chapters in linguistics. As the founding director of the Cyprus Acquisition Team, he has more recently carried out research on (a)typical and impaired language development, with a focus on diglossic and multilingual contexts. In this context, he currently coordinates a Marie Curie research grant on in the development of morphosyntax in children with Down Syndrome.