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DISCUSSION

THE APOGEE OF MISREPRESENTATIONS: A LONG RESPONSE TO SHI (2023)

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Since my book *Universal grammar and iconicity* (Cambridge University Press) was published in early 2022, I have seen comments, questions and various misrepresentations/misinterpretations. As some such feedback is also found in Shi's (2023) *JLC* book review—the Review henceforward—and an officially published piece is significantly easier to reference, this response will focus on responding to what I regard as the significant issues in the Review.

It is generally typical of a book's author to welcome a review because the latter, whether critical or praiseful, makes more readers aware of the book, not to mention that a different perspective often helps the author see where clarifications are called for, theoretical and empirical improvements can be done in the future and, in some cases, flaws ought to be fixed. I am no exception. At the same time, the Review also reveals two types of problems in presenting the contents of my book, some of them representative of the overall feedback I have received. On one hand, this does not surprise me since the book has adopted a philosophy apart from the prevalent practice of modern intellectual activities. An unfamiliar way of thinking is prone to misunderstanding and all its unpleasant consequences. On the other hand, precisely because I stand by the particular philosophy underlying the book's technical contents, a

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philosophy which I believe will enhance the general linguistic research, I feel compelled to make clear what the book has actually said **INSTEAD OF** the second-hand report by the Review which paints many inaccurate pictures of my ideas and analyses.

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1. AN ACCURATE RECOUNT, PLEASE!

A book review typically offers a perspective somewhat different from the book's own, thereby promoting independent thinking and ultimately enriching the collective knowledge of the field. For this goal to be accomplished, however, a prerequisite is taken for granted: Whichever parts of the book a review addresses are recounted accurately. It is unfortunate that many, indeed too many, inaccuracies are found throughout the Review.

1.1 The Missing Essences

After spending the first two-plus pages—more than 1/6 of the total 12-pages of text—elaborating on the general role of interface theories in the Universal Grammar (UG) framework, the Review introduces my theory with this single paragraph (I have capitalized a few words in it):

“The interface operation is taken to a new direction by this book [Li 2022a], in which he argues for an interface between UG and iconicity. The basic assumption in his book is that the generative grammar enterprise could be considered as a module, namely, University Grammar (UG), which could interact with some other modules at the same level when necessities arise. What underlies this assumption is his BELIEF that within the domain of sentence-generation UG has some functional deficiencies. [...] He also BELIEVES that the interface interaction between UG and iconicity will fill some voids and generate the correct form of certain special type of sentences, phrases and compound words.” (p. 249–250)

The cursory description and the wording jointly leave a reader with the inevitable impression that (a) the book merely proposes one more interface which is (b) based on the author's “beliefs”. Both points are far from the truth.