

# Re: unnatural languages

---

*Source:* <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2007-03/msg01682.html>

---

- *From:* [hru...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:hru...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx) (Herman Rubin)
  - *Date:* 21 Mar 2007 17:25:09 -0400
- 

In article <1174399032.873398.218480@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>, Peter T. Daniels <grammatim@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

On Mar 15, 3:43 pm, hru...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx (Herman Rubin) wrote:

In article <1173929457.442038.57...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>, Peter T. Daniels <gramma...@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

On Mar 14, 5:43 pm, hru...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx (Herman Rubin) wrote:

In article <1173824361.678668.201...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>, Peter T. Daniels <gramma...@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

On Mar 13, 3:48 pm, hru...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx (Herman Rubin) wrote:

BTW,  
algebraic  
notation can  
be applied  
to ordinary  
language.  
Variables  
are  
linguistic  
entities,  
which  
can  
substitute

## Re: unnatural languages

for  
anything,  
and have  
rigid rules.  
Euclid  
could, and  
did, use  
variables  
for  
geometric  
objects, but  
variables  
for anything  
else had not  
yet  
been  
invented.

Applications of logical  
systems to human language  
were tried --  
Generative Semantics,  
Montague grammar -- and  
were soon abandoned.

One can try too hard to achieve what cannot  
yet be done.  
I was not suggesting replacing language, but  
adding the  
capabilities of "algebraic notation" to  
language. This  
is partly done now, but clumsily and in too  
limited a  
manner. We use such terms as gizmo,  
doohickey,  
whatamajig; these are used as variables. We  
also say,  
"From place A to place B." this is linguistic  
use of  
variables, and we could replace "A" by "Q"  
and "B" by  
"RsT". If we had a few dozen places to keep  
track  
of, or people, we could use variables for  
notation.  
We can even use variables for verbs or  
adjectives.  
THIS is the suggestion, and it can be done  
early.

## Re: unnatural languages

It is of course part of every human language. It needs no "adding" from "algebraic notation."

It is?

For the umpteen gazillionth time, learn something about human language before you continue to spout off about it.

Or even "foundations of mathematics," as in Russell and Whitehead, or Carnap, etc.

We have much better now. Those are limited, wordy, and now obsolete. I am known in that field.

EVERYTHING in human language that isn't a proper name is a variable.

Do you include verbs, adjectives, adverbs? And at most, these are highly restricted variables. The brevity of the notation is important. How would YOU use human language to disambiguate

He gave him his toy.

Why could not the Greeks use it?

Because Euclid and Archimedes weren't as smart as you?

I do not claim credit for much on variables. The real work was done by Diophantus (c. 300), Viète (16th century), Boole, Pierce and others (19th century), and many in the 20th century. Euclid and Archimedes were 5 centuries before Diophantus.

—

This address is for information only. I do not claim that these views are those of the Statistics Department or of Purdue University. Herman Rubin, Department of Statistics, Purdue University

Re: unnatural languages

Re: unnatural languages

hrubin@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx Phone: (765)494-6054 FAX: (765)494-0558