

## ENG 200

### Critical Thinking Assignment #2

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*How do you think your languages are represented in your brain: coordinately, compoundly, or subordinately? Give evidence as to why you suspect that is the case, and hypothesize as to how it developed to be so.*

The representation of languages in the brain is a complex and multifaceted process. While it is difficult to provide definitive evidence regarding the specific nature of language representation, it is plausible to argue that languages are represented as a combination of compound and subordinate structures within the brain.

First, let's consider the compound representation. Language learners often encounter similarities and overlaps between their native language and the target language they are acquiring. These similarities can facilitate the learning process. For example, cognates, which are words that have a similar form and meaning in different languages, can serve as bridges between the native and target languages. These shared linguistic elements can be processed and stored together, forming compound representations that aid in SLA. Pattern recognition also plays a crucial role in language processing and acquisition. When learners identify recurring patterns or structures across different languages, they can create compound representations that integrate these shared features. For instance,

recognizing the similarities between verb conjugation patterns in different languages allows learners to generalize their knowledge and apply it to new contexts.

As for subordinate representation, during the early stages of second language acquisition, learners often rely on their first language (L1) as a basis for understanding and producing the second language (L2). This phenomenon is known as language transfer. Language transfer occurs when knowledge or skills from one language influence the learning or use of another language. Language transfer can manifest in several ways. Learners may transfer the hierarchical structures and word order patterns from their L1 to the L2. For example, if a learner's L1 has a subject-verb-object (SVO) word order, they may initially produce sentences in the L2 with the same structure, even if the target language has a different word order. Also, learners may transfer syntactic and grammatical features from their L1 to the L2. For instance, if a learner's L1 has grammatical gender distinctions, they may erroneously assign gender to nouns in the L2, even if the target language lacks gendered nouns. Positive and negative transfer is evidence that language is represented subordonately.

In conclusion, we have argued that languages are represented as a combination of compound and subordinate structures. The compound representation arises from shared linguistic elements between languages, while the subordinate representation occurs in much earlier stages of language development or when one language dominates in representation in the brain, so similar structures for other languages are accessed through the first.