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# A User's Guide to Thought and Meaning

By Ray Jackendoff



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## A User's Guide to Thought and Meaning By Ray Jackendoff

Hailed as a "masterpiece" (*Nature*) and as "the most important book in the sciences of language to have appeared in many years" (Steven Pinker), Ray Jackendoff's *Foundations of Language* was widely acclaimed as a landmark work of scholarship that radically overturned our understanding of how language, the brain, and perception intermesh.

*A User's Guide to Thought and Meaning* is Jackendoff's most important book since his groundbreaking *Foundations of Language*. Written with an informality that belies the originality of its insights, it presents a radical new account of the relation between language, meaning, rationality, perception, consciousness, and thought, and, extraordinarily, does this in terms a non-specialist will grasp with ease. Jackendoff starts out by looking at languages and what the meanings of words and sentences actually do. Finding meanings to be more adaptive and complicated than they're commonly given credit for, he is led to some basic questions: how do we perceive and act in the world? How do we talk about it? And how can the collection of neurons in the brain give rise to conscious experience? He shows that the organization of language, thought, and perception does not look much like the way we experience things, and that only a small part of what the brain does is conscious. He concludes that thought and meaning must be almost completely unconscious. What we experience as rational conscious thought--which we prize as setting us apart from the animals--in fact rides on a foundation of unconscious intuition. Rationality amounts to intuition enhanced by language.

Ray Jackendoff's profound and arresting account will appeal to everyone interested in the workings of the mind, in how language links to the world, and in what understanding these means for the way we experience our lives.

Acclaim for *Foundations of Language*:

"A book that deserves to be read and reread by anyone seriously interested in the state of the art of research on language."

--*American Scientist*

"A dazzling combination of theory-building and factual integration. The result is a compelling new view of language and its place in the natural world."

--Steven Pinker, author of *The Language of Instinct* and *Words and Rules*

"A masterpiece. . . . The book deserves to be the reference point for all future theorizing about the language faculty and its interconnections."

--Frederick J. Newmeyer, past president of the Linguistic Society of America

"This book has the potential to reorient linguistics more decisively than any book since *Syntactic Structures* shook the discipline almost half a century ago."

--Robbins Burling, *Language in Society*

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## **Editorial Review**

### Review

"Ray Jackendoff is a monumental scholar in linguistics who, more than any scholar alive today, has shown how language can serve as a window into human nature. Combining theoretical depth with a love of revealing detail, Jackendoff illuminates human reason and consciousness in startling and insightful ways."--Steven Pinker, Harvard University and author of *How the Mind Works* and *The Stuff of Thought*

"This excellent book explains difficult topics accessibly. All readers interested in philosophy, from beginners to experienced professionals, will find it of value." --*Library Journal*

"This volume by Jackendoff (Tufts Univ.) is anything but an average user's guide. Instead it is an uncommonly accessible introduction to the considered, and considerable, view of one of the leading thinkers studying the relationship between thought and meaning...Throughout, Jackendoff skillfully guides readers through both the details of his view and the reasons that motivate it...Highly recommended." --*Choice*

"Ray Jackendoff has an uncanny ability to ask interesting and pressing questions. Anyone interested in language and thought should ask such questions. The asking itself is the primary intellectual act - that, and of course the ordering of the asking, which is by no means obvious and constantly problematical, as he well knows and kindly informs the reader. As for providing answers, pivotal questions may have answers, but they are complex and never simple and thus require extremely careful expression. In his effort to treat his readers in a way that is warm and friendly, he sometimes employs phrases ("kind of," "sort of," "well, like," and other things relaxed speakers tend to say) which I do not find essential, but which for others will surely have the effect of making the issues clear and comprehensible."--Peter Bloom, Professor of Humanities, Smith College

"Clear and concise. The pace is perfect: very short chapters making for a very enjoyable read. The index is also thorough and helpful. As an introduction to a cognitivist perspective on linguistic meaning and thought, this is an extremely helpful book in both tone and content."--*Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*

"As a bridge between practitioners and the general public, this book is extremely successful. There are elements that linguists who are unfamiliar with the cognitive will find illuminating, while the pace and structure of the book lend it to comprehension by a wide range of readers."--*Lingist List*

### About the Author

**Ray Jackendoff** is Seth Merrin Professor of Philosophy and Co-Director of the Center for Cognitive Studies at Tufts University. His books include *Foundations of Language*, *Language, Consciousness, Culture: Essays on Mental Structure*, and *Meaning and the Lexicon: The Parallel Architecture, 1975-2010*.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Chris Bynum:**

People live in this new moment of lifestyle always attempt to and must have the extra time or they will get great deal of stress from both everyday life and work. So , once we ask do people have spare time, we will say absolutely indeed. People is human not really a huge robot. Then we inquire again, what kind of activity are there when the spare time coming to an individual of course your answer will probably unlimited right. Then ever try this one, reading textbooks. It can be your alternative in spending your spare time, the book you have read is A User's Guide to Thought and Meaning.

#### **Matthew Williams:**

Reading can called head hangout, why? Because if you find yourself reading a book specially book entitled A User's Guide to Thought and Meaning your brain will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in most aspect that maybe unknown for but surely can be your mind friends. Imaging each word written in a guide then become one web form conclusion and explanation in which maybe you never get ahead of. The A User's Guide to Thought and Meaning giving you a different experience more than blown away your thoughts but also giving you useful data for your better life on this era. So now let us demonstrate the relaxing pattern at this point is your body and mind will probably be pleased when you are finished examining it, like winning an activity. Do you want to try this extraordinary shelling out spare time activity?

#### **Jack Michaud:**

The book untitled A User's Guide to Thought and Meaning contain a lot of information on the item. The writer explains her idea with easy means. The language is very clear and understandable all the people, so do not really worry, you can easy to read the idea. The book was written by famous author. The author brings you in the new period of literary works. It is possible to read this book because you can continue reading your smart phone, or program, so you can read the book throughout anywhere and anytime. In a situation you wish to purchase the e-book, you can wide open their official web-site in addition to order it. Have a nice examine.

#### **William Copeland:**

As a college student exactly feel bored for you to reading. If their teacher asked them to go to the library or to make summary for some book, they are complained. Just little students that has reading's heart and soul or real their leisure activity. They just do what the trainer want, like asked to the library. They go to generally there but nothing reading really. Any students feel that looking at is not important, boring as well as can't see colorful images on there. Yeah, it is to become complicated. Book is very important to suit your needs. As

we know that on this period of time, many ways to get whatever we wish. Likewise word says, many ways to reach Chinese's country. Therefore , this A User's Guide to Thought and Meaning can make you sense more interested to read.

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