

《外星人来了，我们该怎么和他们交流呢？》

导读:我们大部分人都相信地球之外有外星人的存在，但是你有没有想过：如果发现了外星人，我们能够和他们交流吗？来看看语言学家们的解释... ..



Many scientists believe that alien civilisations exist.

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So let's imagine that we suddenly stand face-to-face with members of an alien species. What would we do first?

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Surely communicating that we come in peace would be a priority. But would we ever be able to understand each other?

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The one thing we can be confident about exchanging with aliens is scientific information.

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If the laws of the universe are the same everywhere, then different descriptions of these laws should, in principle, be equivalent.

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Matters are more complicated when it comes to language, which is the single most important factor in human cooperation.

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Can we expect to learn such an alien language?

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Existing perspectives in the psychology of language give two very different answers.

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The generativist approach, which holds that the structure of language is hardwired into the brain, suggests this wouldn't be possible.

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It argues that humans come with an inbuilt universal grammar that has a specific number of settings – each corresponding to the acceptable order in which words and parts of words can be arranged in a given language system.

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Though the rules of human languages can and do vary, proponents of the generativist model argue they can only do so within strict parameters.

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For generativists, it is extremely unlikely that an alien species would happen to have the same parameters as human beings.

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The cognitive view, on the other hand, sees semantics (structures of meaning) as being more important than syntax (structures of grammar).

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For this reason, proponents of the cognitive view argue that grammar alone is not enough to understand language.

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If an alien species manipulates objects, interacts with its peers and combines concepts, the cognitive approach therefore predicts there might be enough mental architecture in common to make its language accessible to humans.

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Though these results are far from conclusive (for instance, they can't explain why humans alone seem to have language), the evidence leans towards the cognitive account.

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So, it might be reasonable to assume that humans could learn alien languages.

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