

Letters

■ Editor:

I agree with much of what Dr. Levinson has to say, especially with regard to the need for interdisciplinary approaches to studying intelligence. However, his claim that "the underlying mathematics [of statistical pattern recognition] capture[s] something fundamental about classifying sound patterns" is quite mistaken. Any causal phenomenon, from language to weather, exhibits statistical regularity; so, the fact that statistical analysis can be applied to sound patterns tells us nothing about sound patterns in particular. Moreover, I doubt that such analysis applies equally well to all levels in the "hierarchy of such patterns," in particular the conceptual or semantic levels.

Most importantly, one cannot even gather the statistics required by such approaches without first developing the models of the "different levels of linguistic analysis" to which Dr. Levinson refers. In other words, it is not the statistics that bears the functional weight here, it is the building of the representation theory about the task domain, which is then used to direct the search for correlations. This is the real work, and it is quite different in nature from the subsequent statistical analysis. It is also exactly what is not addressed by "conduct[ing] experiments at the lexical level." Dr. Levinson and his team deserve credit for scaling up speech-recognition systems over the years. But I don't think this has much to do with his original model.

Roger Schank

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