# K of Semantics T

T on the basis of semantics endorses a methodology of linguistic “correctness” that creates a violent dichotomy between competent and inferior English speakers.

#### Niemi[[1]](#footnote-1)

Though I believe Mr. Nebel to be fundamentally wrong on the debate theoretical level, I have a more serious objection. I will make this claim in the strongest terms I possibly can. Correctness is racism. Correctness is “you must be either a boy or a girl or you are wrong.” Correctness is “the ideal functioning body versus all others.” Correctness is one kind of person having access to The Truth and others lacking it. Correctness is “sit down and shut up.” Correctness is “your kind aren’t welcome here.” Any debater who runs so called “Nebel T” and any judge who votes for this argument must acknowledge that they are situationally and strategically embracing [It is] a perspective from which there is an implicit or explicit metric of what it means to be a competent english speaker. What is the logical conclusion [is] of speaking competent English? The notion that “mongrel” forms of english are inferior, diminished, unpersuasive, and should not have access to the ballot. Quite possibly the notion that those who can’t live up to these standards should not be involved in debate. After all, their dialects are not what resolutions are written in – it is people like Mr. Nebel whose dialect prescribes correct resolutional meaning. You may say that “competent speakers” was a rhetorical flourish, I am nitpicking, and that Mr. Nebel should certainly be allowed to take back his offensive speech. I will say this: the competent english speaker, aka the correct type of thinking and being, is the fundamental goal and top-level value that Mr. Nebel appeals to throughout his articles. If this is “not what he meant” then he did not mean that debaters should pay any attention to nor follow his logic. Either he defends correctness or he concedes the irrelevance and negative impacts to fairness and education of his position. Nebel may appeal to pragmatics as a way out of the appeal to correctness, but in fact, his pragmatic claims are a pragmatic justification for correctness. This concedes pragmatics first anyway, and that so to speak, is a flow I can win on. It is my opinion that there is no in or out of round benefit that correctness could provide sufficient to outweigh the toxicity of its implementation and rhetorical methodology. In one sense we should be thankful that Mr. Nebel has let the cat out of the bag: T arguments from the perspective of correctness have always been the vehicle for racism and exclusion of all sorts. I cannot imagine a construction of competent english or correct grammar that is not racialized, gendered, and further influenced by its origins. To me it is impossible to endorse the claim to correctness without conceding that one is invested in a justification of domination (of course they won’t call it that) stretching across axes of class, race, gender, flesh, and cultural origin. The one place where Mr. Nebel speaks to this question, he dismisses it by claiming that specific examples are insufficient to deal with the bare plurality of his arguments. Mr. Nebel is kind to differentiate for us that there is “generic” or “competent” english, and that is its own dialect, where as these other dialects or ways of speaking are simply different uncomparable dialects. This truly tests my credulity. Are higher pitched so-called “feminine” voices less competent speakers of english? Are those who have read words in books but never heard them pronounced due to lack of high-grade prep school educations less competent? What about those who speak in accents, vernaculars, or dialects of english? For that matter, what about overlaps and points of connection between those ways of speaking and “generic english?” We can easily assume what Mr. Nebel thinks about speech impediments, or those who are unfamiliar with formal usage of grammar. Perhaps even run on sentences disqualify one from being a competent english speaker? Or an overabundance of rhetorical questions? Does anyone have memorized the full and formal set of rules for speaking competent or proper english? Does anyone actually trust that all those rules aren’t implicitly ideological? It is hard to believe that Mr. Nebel is blind to the values he endorses. Perhaps we should accurately hold him to them.

The alternative is to reject T arguments from the perspective of correctness—to sever the link between correctness and better debating. Whether the judge can evaluate who is doing the better debating presumes equal ability to debate and gain access to the ballot. Some arguments make the round exclusionary—thus the prima facie role of the ballot is to maintain the safety of the debate space—it’s a voting issue since it’s a prerequisite to debate itself—the judge cannot evaluate who is winning on another layer of the flow if you exclude others voices.

# Reasonability

Use a reasonability paradigm with a brightline that permits Affs specifically at ToC [if they’re disclosed on the wiki at least an hour before it’s **first** read], has been read throughout the topic by other people, and if the literature exists to answer it. Prefer because:

1. Allows for a greater breadth of Affs. More Affs allow us to learn about more topics, maximizing education. Education is a voter because it’s the constitutive goal of the activity and outweighs: the ToC Invitation states the prioritization of education over aspects that deal with competition, such as fairness.

#### Arnett et al. ‘16[[2]](#footnote-2)

Education and Openness policy[:] While the TOC is a competitive event, we strongly believe that it is an educational endeavor. All debates at the TOC are considered open to the public, and any person including coaches, debaters, parents, school officials, and members of the general public are allowed to observe and take notes in TOC debate rounds. Any sources read as evidence in round should be available to other competitors should they make a request for the citation after the evidence has been read.

1. It’s better to generally minimize the frequency that T is read—Affs can’t predict what shell you would read, and every T shell is bidirectional. That means every round would devolve to T unless we have a shared agreement about what Affs are okay. [The bidirectional interp: Must spec a region.]
2. It being on the wiki long enough for you to prep is sufficient to guarantee engagement—the wiki is the *actual* basis for research, not the res—when we read lit we’re always reading for things that are applicable to certain positions and we derive our search terms from other people’s cases.

# Frontlines

**AT Semantics**

Semantics aren’t fixed and absolute—rather, they are and should be shaped by communal norms:

1. Framers of the res are a lot less deliberate and knowledgeable than we tend to assume—instead, as debaters, we should take it into our hands to frame Aff limits, since we do way more research and are the ones actually debating. [Saying they *do* write the res is the is-ought fallacy, but also debaters vote for the topic, which means in the status quo they already have some jurisdiction on the issue.]
2. The Rousseau framework of the Aff criticizes overly legalistic concerns at the expense of the norms of democratic inclusion that we should inculcate—that’s applicable to how we determine the meaning of words as well. Inclusion of voices on the issue is important.
3. Kripke says we can’t determine the constitutive content of rules, including semantic ones, instead we must rely on communal norms to interpret words in the resolution.

Additionally, the Semantics K is defense on this level—additional reason not to prefer semantics.

AT Semantics basis for prep

No, the wiki is the *actual* basis for research, not the res—when we read lit we’re always reading for things that are applicable to certain positions and we derive our search terms from other people’s cases.

**AT Defend whole res with specific offense**

This is a terrible argument—reading a plan without the plan text meets none of your offense because it has all the harms of the plan, and is net worse because a) it’s under the guise of a whole res Aff so people can’t prep it, whereas I have the plan text disclosed, and b) the Neg would always win by reading a PIC that is the Aff but with the text of the Aff policy.

**AT Jurisdiction!**

[Education outweighs but also] You haven’t shown that jurisdiction is a strict question of semantics. The reasonability brightline and all the reasons why semantics don’t matter deny the notion that the judge must vote for a strictly semantically topical Aff.

1. http://premierdebatetoday.com/2015/09/22/nebel-t-i-sip-it/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. David Arnett [ToC Tournament Director] and JW Patterson [Tournament Founder]. “Tournament of Champions Tournament Invitation.” 29 January 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)