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## Chomsky

Noam Chomsky is one of the leading intellectual figures of modern times. He has had a major influence on linguistics, psychology, and philosophy, and a significant effect on a range of other disciplines from anthropology to mathematics, education to literary criticism.

In this rigorous yet accessible account of Chomsky's work and influence, Neil Smith analyzes Chomsky's key contributions to the study of language and the study of mind. He gives a detailed and partly historical exposition of Chomsky's linguistic theorizing, and examines the ideas (such as deep and surface structure) for which he is best known. Smith discusses the psychological and philosophical implications of Chomsky's work, and argues that he has fundamentally changed the way we think of ourselves, gaining a position in the history of ideas on a par with that of Darwin or Descartes. Finally, he examines Chomsky's political ideas and how these fit intellectually with his scholarly work. Smith argues that, despite Chomsky's own disavowal of any very close connection, there are fundamental ideas of rationality, creativity, and modularity that draw together the disparate strands of his vast output. Throughout, Smith explores the controversy surrounding Chomsky's work, and explains why he has been both adulated and vilified.

This second edition has been thoroughly updated and revised to account for Chomsky's most recent work, including his continued contributions to linguistics (in particular new developments in the Minimalist Program), his further discussion on evolution, and his extensive work on the events of September 11, 2001 and their aftermath. The bibliography and notes have been expanded to account for the rapidly growing secondary literature on Chomsky's work, as well as the many new works by Chomsky himself. It will be welcomed by students and researchers across the disciplines of linguistics, philosophy, cognitive science and politics, and anyone with an interest in the impact of Chomsky's work.

NEIL SMITH is Professor and Head of Linguistics at University College London. He is the author of *An Outline Grammar of Nupe* (1967); *The Acquisition of Phonology* (Cambridge University Press, 1973); *Modern Linguistics: The Results of Chomsky's Revolution* (with Deirdre Wilson, 1979); *The Twitter Machine: Reflections on Language* (1989); *The Mind of a Savant* (with Ianthi Tsimpli, 1995), *Language, Bananas and Bonobos* (2002), and he has edited a volume on *Mutual Knowledge* (1982). In addition, he has published around one hundred and fifty essays, articles and reviews in a wide variety of publications, including *Journal of Linguistics*, *Lingua*, *Journal of Neurolinguistics*, and *Glott International*. He was elected FBA in 1999 and an Honorary Member of the Linguistic Society of America in 2000.

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## *Ideas and Ideals*

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*Dedication to my friends*

Dear friends, I say friends here  
In the larger sense of the word:  
Wife, sister, associates, relatives,  
Schoolmates, men and women,  
Persons seen only once  
Or frequented all my life:  
Provided that between us, for at least a moment,  
Was drawn a segment,  
A well-defined chord.

. . . remember the time  
Before the wax hardened.

From "To my friends" by Primo Levi (Levi, 1990: 5)

Contents

<i>Preface to the second edition</i>	<i>page xi</i>
<i>Acknowledgments for the first edition</i>	<i>xiii</i>
Introduction	1
Chomsky’s achievement	1
On heroes and influences	4
1 The mirror of the mind	6
Linguistics as a science	7
The nature of idealization	10
Common sense	14
Modularity	15
Double dissociation	19
Modules and quasi-modules	23
Intelligence and “learning”	24
Competence and performance	25
Competence and grammar	26
Rules	27
I-language and E-language	28
Performance, parsing, and pragmatics	32
Parsing considerations	32
Pragmatic considerations	34
Competence and performance versus I-language and E-language	35
Evolution and innateness	36
Language acquisition	37
Poverty of the stimulus	38
Word meaning	39
Universals	40
Natural language and the language of thought	43
Summary	45
2 The linguistic foundation	46
Introduction	46
Knowledge of language	47
The lexicon	47
Knowledge of structure	49
Knowledge of structural relations	50
	vii

viii	Contents	
	Levels of representation	53
	Constituents and rules	54
	Deep structure	56
	Description versus explanation	58
	From rules of principles	60
	The elimination of PS rules	63
	X-bar theory	64
	Government and Binding theory	66
	Binding theory	66
	Locality	68
	Theta theory	69
	Case theory and government	70
	Empty categories	73
	The status of transformations	76
	Principles and parameters	78
	Lexical and functional categories	80
	Minimalism	83
	Economy	86
	The elements of Minimalism	88
	Perfect syntax	92
	A historical progression	93
	Evolution	94
3	Psychological reality	97
	Causality and observability	99
	Psychological reality and the nature of evidence	101
	Intuitions	103
	Language processing	109
	The derivational theory of complexity	110
	Grammars and parsers	112
	Parsing problems	115
	Economy	117
	Language acquisition (Plato's problem)	119
	Teaching versus learning	119
	Learning versus growing	120
	Parameter setting	120
	The critical period hypothesis	123
	Maturation	126
	Language pathology	129
	Agenesis of the corpus callosum	129
	The polyglot <i>savant</i>	130
	Specific language impairment (SLI)	131
	Connectionism: the behaviorists strike back	133
4	Philosophical realism: commitments and controversies	138
	Commitments	138
	Realism	138
	I-language revisited	140
	Representation and computation	141
	Naturalism	142
	Mentalism	144

Cambridge University Press  
052183788X - Chomsky: Ideas and Ideals, Second Edition  
Neil Smith  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

Contents	ix
Tacit knowledge	145
The mind–body problem	146
Controversies	147
Language and the world	147
Language and the community	150
Language and the individual	156
Problems of semantics	162
Innateness	167
Unification and reduction	173
Conclusions	175
5 Language and freedom	176
Explanation and dissent: the common threads	176
Relentless dissent	176
Common sense and theory	176
Rationality, modularity, and creativity	179
Rationality	179
Modularity	181
Malleability and plasticity	182
Creativity	184
The anarchist background	185
The Encyclopédistes	188
The critique of (American) foreign policy	189
Vietnam	191
East Timor	192
9–11: terrorism and the “war on terror”	194
The critique of domestic policy	197
Pig farming in Haiti	198
Drug trafficking	199
The critique of media control	200
Murder	202
Third world elections	202
The treason of the intellectuals	203
The technique of dissection	204
The exposure of warped perspective	205
The exposure of suppressed precursor events	206
The exposure of debased language	207
Moral absolutes and options for the future	209
The Faurisson affair	209
Islamic fundamentalism	210
Authority	212
The positive program	212
Conclusion	214
Envoi	216
<i>Notes</i>	217
<i>Bibliography</i>	248
<i>Index</i>	276

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052183788X - Chomsky: Ideas and Ideals, Second Edition  
Neil Smith  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

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## Preface to the second edition

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Much has happened in the five years since I finished the first edition of this book. Linguistics has advanced, the cognitive sciences have exploded, the world has become ever more dangerous, and Chomsky has continued to lead a dual existence as academic and activist.

To take account of all these changes is impossible. Nevertheless, I have made many additions and amendments. First, I have corrected mistakes where I have become aware of them, and attempted to clarify points which were unclear. Second, I have updated the notes and references where that has been within my ability. As no one can be master of all the disciplines touched on here, I have concentrated on updating those sections pertaining to areas where Chomsky's recent work has been directly relevant. As a result, the bibliography contains entries for about forty new works by Chomsky himself: over fifteen new or revised books, and another twenty-five new articles. At the same time, the secondary literature on Chomsky has also burgeoned: major works have appeared by Antony & Hornstein (2003), McGilvray (1999), Mitchell & Schoeffel (2002), Winston (2002), and many others. These, as well as about a hundred other new entries are likewise included and, where relevant, I have simultaneously expanded the notes to include reference to these new items.

Third, I have attempted to give some indication of how the field and the world have changed since 1998. Chomsky has continued to produce seminal work in linguistics, and I have revised the relevant sections of chapter 2 and added some discussion of developments in Minimalism accordingly. This has entailed making a number of modifications to the first edition, where I had failed to lay the relevant groundwork for some of the issues that now occupy center-stage. I have also updated the discussion of evolution, another area where Chomsky has produced interesting new work. Most obviously, I have added a section on the events of September 11, 2001 and their aftermath – “9–11” – which have overwhelmingly preoccupied Chomsky's time and energy. These revisions and extensions have necessitated other minor changes throughout the book.

As before I have benefited from comment, criticism, and correction from colleagues and friends. In addition to those mentioned in the original



Cambridge University Press

052183788X - Chomsky: Ideas and Ideals, Second Edition

Neil Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

xii Preface to the second edition

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As always, it is a pleasure to acknowledge the love and support of my family and friends.

## Acknowledgments for the first edition

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My greatest debt, both intellectual and personal, is to Noam Chomsky. Without his work, and inspiration, my career would have been radically different, and this book would obviously not have existed. In addition, he has made time over the years to talk and correspond with me, despite the overwhelming pressures of his innumerable other commitments. When I sent him the pre-final version of the manuscript, he replied with some sixty pages of comments and suggestions. If I have still misrepresented him in any way, he is not to blame. It has been a privilege to work in his shadow.

A number of colleagues and friends have discussed all or parts of the contents of this book over the five years or so that I have been preoccupied with it: Stefanie Anyadi, Misi Brody, Robyn Carston, Ray Cattell, Teun Hoekstra, Rita Manzini, Milena Nuti, Ianthi Tsimpli, Hans van de Koot, Nigel Vincent, and especially Annabel Cormack and Deirdre Wilson. Needless to say, they are not to be taken to agree with what I have written, nor to be blamed because I have sometimes failed to take their advice. Closer to home my family – Amahl, Ivan, and Saras – have inspired and supported me with sage advice, heartfelt encouragement, and good food.

Part of the work for this book was carried out while I was in receipt of a British Academy research grant, which was matched by a comparable period of sabbatical leave from University College London. I was also granted travel expenses by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at UCL to visit Chomsky at MIT. I am grateful to the Academy and to the College for their support, and to my colleagues for shouldering my duties while I was away.