Noam Chomsky
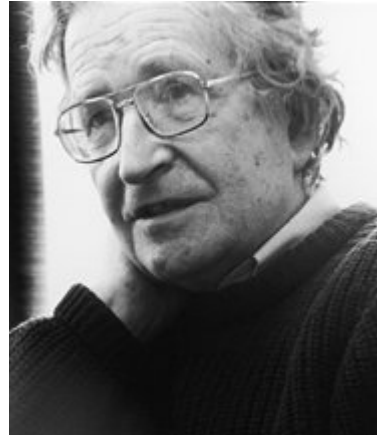
Avram Noam Chomsky (pronounced /noʊm ˈtʃɑmski/; born December 7, 1928) is an American linguist, philosopher,[2][3][4] cognitive scientist, political activist, author, and lecturer. He is an Institute Professor emeritus and professor emeritus of linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.[5] Chomsky is well known in the academic and scientific community as the father of modern linguistics.[6][7] Since the 1960s, he has become known more widely as a political dissident, an anarchist,[8] and a libertarian socialist intellectual.

In the 1950s, Chomsky began developing his theory of generative grammar, which has undergone numerous revisions and has had a profound influence on linguistics. Within that field, he has been described as "a hero of Homeric proportions, belonging solidly in the pantheon of our country's finest minds, with all the powers and qualities thereof. First, foremost, and initially he is staggeringly smart. The speed, scope, and synthetic abilities of his intellect are legendary. He is, too, a born leader, able to marshal support, fierce and uncompromising support, for positions he develops or adopts. Often, it seems, he shapes linguistics by sheer force of will."[9] He also established the Chomsky hierarchy, a classification of formal languages in terms of their generative power. His 1959 review of B. F. Skinner's *Verbal Behavior* challenged the behaviorist approaches to studies of behavior and language dominant at the time and contributed to the cognitive revolution in psychology. His naturalistic[10] approach to the study of language has affected the philosophy of language and mind.[11]

Noam Chomsky		
Western Philosophy		
20th / 21st-century philosophy		
Full name	Noam Chomsky	
Birth	7 December 1928 (age 79) Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	
School/tradition	Linguistics, Analytic	
Main interests	Linguistics · Psychology Philosophy of language Philosophy of mind Politics · Ethics	
Notable ideas	Generative grammar, universal grammar, transformational grammar, government and binding, X-bar theory, Chomsky hierarchy, context-free grammar, principles and parameters, the minimalist program, language acquisition device, poverty of the stimulus, Chomsky Normal Form, propaganda model[1]	

Beginning with his opposition to the Vietnam War

Chomsky established himself as a prominent critic of US foreign and domestic policy. He is a self-declared adherent of libertarian socialism which he regards as "the proper and natural extension of classical liberalism into the era of advanced industrial society."[12]

According to the Arts and Humanities Citation Index in 1992, Chomsky was cited as a source more often than any other living scholar during the 1980–92 period, and was the eighth most-cited source.[13][14][15] At the same time, his status as a leading critic of American politics has made him a controversial figure.[16]

Biography

Chomsky was born to Jewish parents in the East Oak Lane neighborhood of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the son of Hebrew scholar and IWW member William Chomsky (1896–1977), who was from a town in Ukraine. His mother, Elsie Chomsky (born Simonofsky), came from what is now Belarus, but unlike her husband she grew up in the United States and spoke "ordinary New York English". Their first language was Yiddish, but Chomsky says it was "taboo" in his family to speak it. He describes his family as living in a sort of "Jewish ghetto", split into a "Yiddish side" and "Hebrew side", with his family aligning with the latter and bringing him up "immersed in Hebrew culture and literature". Chomsky also describes tensions he personally experienced with Irish Catholics and anti-semitism in the mid-1930s. In a discussion of the irony of his staying in the 1980s in a Jesuit House in Central America, Chomsky explained that during his childhood,"We were the only Jewish family around. I grew up with a visceral fear of Catholics. They're the people who beat you up on your way to school. So I knew when they came out of that building down the street, which was the Jesuit school, they were raving anti-Semites. So childhood memories took a long time to overcome."[17]

Chomsky remembers the first article he wrote was at age 10 while a student at Oak Lane Country Day School about the threat of the spread of fascism, following the fall of Barcelona in the Spanish Civil War. From the age of 12 or 13, he identified more fully with anarchist politics.[18]

A graduate of Central High School of Philadelphia, in 1945 Chomsky began studying philosophy and linguistics at the University of Pennsylvania, learning from philosophers C. West Churchman and Nelson Goodman and linguist Zellig Harris. Harris' teaching included his discovery of transformations as a mathematical analysis of language structure (mappings from one subset to another in the set of sentences). Chomsky subsequently reinterpreted these as operations on the productions of a context-free grammar (derived from Post production systems). Harris' political views were instrumental in shaping those of Chomsky. Chomsky received a BA in 1949 and an MA in 1951 from the University of Pennsylvania.

In 1949, he married linguist Carol Schatz. They have two daughters, Aviva (b. 1957) and Diane (b. 1960), and a son, Harry (b. 1967).

Chomsky received his PhD in linguistics from the University of Pennsylvania in 1955. He conducted part of his doctoral research during four years at Harvard University as a Harvard Junior Fellow. In his doctoral thesis, he began to develop some of his linguistic ideas, elaborating on them in his 1957 book *Syntactic Structures*, his best-known work in linguistics.

Chomsky joined the staff of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1955 and in 1961 was appointed full professor in the Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics (now the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy). From 1966 to 1976 he held the Ferrari P. Ward Professorship of Modern Languages and Linguistics, and in 1976 he was appointed Institute Professor. As of 2008, Chomsky has taught at MIT continuously for 53 years.

In February 1967, Chomsky became one of the leading opponents of the Vietnam War with the publication of his essay, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals",[19] in *The New York Review of Books*. This was followed by his 1969 book, *American Power and the New Mandarins*, a collection of essays which established him at the forefront of American dissent. His far-reaching criticisms of US foreign policy and the legitimacy of US power have made him a controversial figure: largely shunned by the mainstream media in the United States,[20][21][22][23] he is frequently sought out for his views by publications and news outlets worldwide.

Chomsky has received death threats because of his criticisms of US foreign policy.[24] He was also on a list of planned targets created by Theodore Kaczynski, better known as the Unabomber; during the period that Kaczynski was at large, Chomsky had all of his mail checked for explosives[24]. He states that he often receives undercover police protection, in particular while on the MIT campus, although he does not agree with the police protection.[24]

Chomsky resides in Lexington, Massachusetts and travels often, giving lectures on politics.

Contributions to linguistics

Professor Chomsky lecturing on biolinguistics at the University of California, Berkeley in 2003.

Chomskyan linguistics, beginning with his *Syntactic Structures*, a distillation of his *Logical Structure of Linguistic Theory* (1955, 75), challenges structural linguistics and introduces transformational grammar. This theory takes utterances (sequences of words) to have a syntax which can be characterized by a formal grammar; in particular, a context-free grammar extended with transformational rules.

Children are hypothesized to have an innate knowledge of the basic grammatical structure common to all human languages (i.e., they assume that any language which they encounter is of a certain restricted kind). This innate knowledge is often referred to as universal grammar. It is argued that modeling knowledge of language using a formal grammar accounts for the "productivity" of language: with a limited set of grammar rules and a finite set of terms, humans are able to produce an infinite number of sentences, including sentences no one has previously said. He has always acknowledged his debt to Pāṇini for his modern notion of an explicit generative grammar. This is related to Rationalist ideas of a priori knowledge, in that it is not due to experience.

The Principles and Parameters approach (P&P)—developed in his Pisa 1979 Lectures, later published as *Lectures on Government and Binding* (LGB)—make strong claims regarding universal grammar: that the grammatical principles underlying languages are innate and fixed, and the differences among the world's languages can be characterized in terms of parameter settings in the brain (such as the pro-drop parameter, which indicates whether an explicit subject is always required, as in English, or can be optionally dropped, as in Spanish), which are often likened to switches. (Hence the term principles and parameters, often given to this approach.) In this view, a child learning a language need only acquire the necessary lexical items (words, grammatical morphemes, and idioms), and determine the appropriate parameter settings, which can be done based on a few key examples.

Proponents of this view argue that the pace at which children learn languages is inexplicably rapid, unless children have an innate ability to learn languages. The similar steps followed by children all across the world when learning languages, and

the fact that children make certain characteristic errors as they learn their first language, whereas other seemingly logical kinds of errors never occur (and, according to Chomsky, should be attested if a purely general, rather than language-specific, learning mechanism were being employed), are also pointed to as motivation for innateness.

More recently, in his Minimalist Program (1995), while retaining the core concept of "principles and parameters", Chomsky attempts a major overhaul of the linguistic machinery involved in the LGB model, stripping from it all but the barest necessary elements, while advocating a general approach to the architecture of the human language faculty that emphasizes principles of economy and optimal design, reverting to a derivational approach to generation, in contrast with the largely representational approach of classic P&P.

In 1999, research done at the Grabscheid Clinical and Research Center for Voice Disorders at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City showed that slow tonic muscle fibers in the muscles of human vocal cords do not exist in other mammals, creating support and a possible explanation for Chomsky's theories.[25]

Chomsky's ideas have had a strong influence on researchers investigating the acquisition of language in children, though some[specify] researchers who work in this area today do not support Chomsky's theories, instead advocating emergentist or connectionist theories reducing language to an instance of general processing mechanisms in the brain.

He also theorizes that unlimited extension of a language such as English is possible only by the recursive device of embedding sentences in sentences.[citation needed]

His best-known work in phonology is *The Sound Pattern of English* (1968), written with Morris Halle (and often known as simply *SPE*). This work has had a great significance for the development in the field. While phonological theory has since moved beyond "SPE phonology" in many important respects, the SPE system is considered the precursor of some of the most influential phonological theories today, including autosegmental phonology, lexical phonology and optimality theory. Chomsky does not publish on phonology anymore.

Generative grammar

The Chomskyan approach towards syntax, often termed generative grammar, studies grammar as a body of knowledge possessed by language users. Since the 1960s, Chomsky has maintained that much of this knowledge is innate, implying that children need only learn certain parochial features of their native languages.[26] The innate body of linguistic knowledge is often termed Universal Grammar. From Chomsky's perspective, the strongest evidence for the existence of Universal Grammar is simply the fact that children successfully acquire their native languages in so little time. Furthermore, he argues that there is an enormous gap between the

linguistic stimuli to which children are exposed and the rich linguistic knowledge which they attain (the "poverty of the stimulus" argument). The knowledge of Universal Grammar would serve to bridge that gap.

Chomsky's theories are popular, particularly in the United States, but they have never been free from controversy. Criticism has come from a number of different directions. Chomskyan linguists rely heavily on the intuitions of native speakers regarding which sentences of their languages are well-formed. This practice has been criticized both on general methodological grounds, and because it has (some argue) led to an overemphasis on the study of English. As of now, hundreds of different languages have received at least some attention in the generative grammar literature,[27][28][29][30][31] but some critics nonetheless perceive this overemphasis, and a tendency to base claims about Universal Grammar on an overly small sample of languages. Some psychologists and psycholinguists, though sympathetic to Chomsky's overall program, have argued that Chomskyan linguists pay insufficient attention to experimental data from language processing, with the consequence that their theories are not psychologically plausible. More radical critics have questioned whether it is necessary to posit Universal Grammar in order to explain child language acquisition, arguing that domain-general learning mechanisms are sufficient.

Today there are many different branches of generative grammar; one can view grammatical frameworks such as head-driven phrase structure grammar, lexical functional grammar and combinatory categorial grammar as broadly Chomskyan and generative in orientation, but with significant differences in execution.

Cultural anthropologist and linguist Daniel Everett of Illinois State University has proposed that the language of the Pirahã people of the northwestern rainforest of Brazil resists Chomsky's theories of generative grammar. Everett asserts that the Pirahã language does not have any evidence of recursion, one of the key properties of generative grammar. Additionally, it is claimed that the Pirahan have no fixed words for colors or numbers, speak in single phonemes, and often speak in prosody.[32] However, Everett's claims have themselves been criticized. David Pesetsky of MIT, Andrew Nevins of Harvard, and Cilene Rodrigues of the Universidade Estadual de Campinas in Brazil have argued in a joint paper that all of Everett's major claims contain serious deficiencies.[33] The dispute continues.[34]

Chomsky hierarchy

Chomsky is famous for investigating various kinds of formal languages and whether or not they might be capable of capturing key properties of human language. His Chomsky hierarchy partitions formal grammars into classes, or groups, with increasing expressive power, i.e., each successive class can generate a broader set of formal languages than the one before. Interestingly, Chomsky argues that modeling some aspects of human language requires a more complex formal grammar (as measured by the Chomsky hierarchy) than modeling others. For example, while a regular language is powerful enough to model English morphology, it is not powerful

enough to model English syntax. In addition to being relevant in linguistics, the Chomsky hierarchy has also become important in computer science (especially in compiler construction and automata theory).

Contributions to psychology

Chomsky's work in linguistics has had major implications for modern psychology. [35] For Chomsky, linguistics is a branch of cognitive psychology; genuine insights in linguistics imply concomitant understandings of aspects of mental processing and human nature. His theory of a universal grammar was seen by many as a direct challenge to the established behaviorist theories of the time and had major consequences for understanding how language is learned by children and what, exactly, the ability to use language is. Many of the more basic principles of this theory (though not necessarily the stronger claims made by the principles and parameters approach described above) are now generally accepted in some circles.[*dubious – discuss*]

In 1959, Chomsky published an influential critique of B.F. Skinner's *Verbal Behavior*, a book in which Skinner offered a speculative explanation of language in behavioral terms. "Verbal behavior" he defined as learned behavior which has its characteristic consequences being delivered through the learned behavior of others; this makes for a view of communicative behaviors much larger than that usually addressed by linguists. Skinner's approach focused on the circumstances in which language was used; for example, asking for water was functionally a different response than labeling something as water, responding to someone asking for water, etc. These functionally different kinds of responses, which required in turn separate explanations, sharply contrasted both with traditional notions of language and Chomsky's psycholinguistic approach. Chomsky thought that a functionalist explanation restricting itself to questions of communicative performance ignored important questions. (Chomsky-Language and Mind, 1968). He focused on questions concerning the operation and development of innate structures for syntax capable of creatively organizing, cohering, adapting and combining words and phrases into intelligible utterances.

In the review Chomsky emphasized that the scientific application of behavioral principles from animal research is severely lacking in explanatory adequacy and is furthermore particularly superficial as an account of human verbal behavior because a theory restricting itself to external conditions, to "what is learned", cannot adequately account for generative grammar. Chomsky raised the examples of rapid language acquisition of children, including their quickly developing ability to form grammatical sentences, and the universally creative language use of competent native speakers to highlight the ways in which Skinner's view exemplified under-determination of theory by evidence. He argued that to understand human verbal behavior such as the creative aspects of language use and language development, one must first postulate a genetic linguistic endowment. The assumption that important

aspects of language are the product of universal innate ability runs counter to Skinner's radical behaviorism.

Chomsky's 1959 review has drawn fire from a number of critics, the most famous criticism being that of Kenneth MacCorquodale's 1970 paper *On Chomsky's Review of Skinner's Verbal Behavior* (*Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, volume 13, pages 83–99). This and similar critiques have raised certain points not generally acknowledged outside of behavioral psychology, such as the claim that Chomsky did not possess an adequate understanding of either behavioral psychology in general, or the differences between Skinner's behaviorism and other varieties; consequently, it is argued that he made several serious errors. On account of these perceived problems, the critics maintain that the review failed to demonstrate what it has often been cited as doing. As such, it is averred that those most influenced by Chomsky's paper probably either already substantially agreed with Chomsky or never actually read it. Chomsky has maintained that the review was directed at the way Skinner's variant of behavioral psychology "was being used in Quinean empiricism and naturalization of philosophy".[36]

It has been claimed that Chomsky's critique of Skinner's methodology and basic assumptions paved the way for the "cognitive revolution", the shift in American psychology between the 1950s through the 1970s from being primarily behavioral to being primarily cognitive. In his 1966 *Cartesian Linguistics* and subsequent works, Chomsky laid out an explanation of human language faculties that has become the model for investigation in some areas of psychology. Much of the present conception of how the mind works draws directly from ideas that found their first persuasive author of modern times in Chomsky.

There are three key ideas. First is that the mind is "cognitive", or that the mind actually contains mental states, beliefs, doubts, and so on. Second, he argued that most of the important properties of language and mind are innate. The acquisition and development of a language is a result of the unfolding of innate propensities triggered by the experiential input of the external environment. The link between human innate aptitude to language and heredity has been at the core of the debate opposing Noam Chomsky to Jean Piaget at the Abbaye de Royaumont in 1975 (*Language and Learning. The Debate between Jean Piaget and Noam Chomsky*, Harvard University Press, 1980). Although links between the genetic setup of humans and aptitude to language have been suggested at that time and in later discussions, we are still far from understanding the genetic bases of human language. Work derived from the model of selective stabilization of synapses set up by Jean-Pierre Changeux, Philippe Courrège and Antoine Danchin,[37] and more recently developed experimentally and theoretically by Jacques Mehler and Stanislas Dehaene in particular in the domain of numerical cognition lend support to the Chomskyan "nativism". It does not, however, provide clues about the type of rules that would organize neuronal connections to permit language competence. Subsequent psychologists have extended this general "nativist" thesis beyond language. Lastly, Chomsky made the concept of "modularity" a critical feature of the mind's cognitive architecture. The mind is composed of an

array of interacting, specialized subsystems with limited flows of inter-communication. This model contrasts sharply with the old idea that any piece of information in the mind could be accessed by any other cognitive process (optical illusions, for example, cannot be "turned off" even when they are known to be illusions).

Opinion on cultural criticism of science

Chomsky strongly disagrees with post-structuralist and postmodern criticisms of science:

I have spent a lot of my life working on questions such as these, using the only methods I know of; those condemned here as "science", "rationality", "logic" and so on. I therefore read the papers with some hope that they would help me "transcend" these limitations, or perhaps suggest an entirely different course. I'm afraid I was disappointed. Admittedly, that may be my own limitation. Quite regularly, "my eyes glaze over" when I read polysyllabic discourse on the themes of poststructuralism and postmodernism; what I understand is largely truism or error, but that is only a fraction of the total word count. True, there are lots of other things I don't understand: the articles in the current issues of math and physics journals, for example. But there is a difference. In the latter case, I know how to get to understand them, and have done so, in cases of particular interest to me; and I also know that people in these fields can explain the contents to me at my level, so that I can gain what (partial) understanding I may want. In contrast, no one seems to be able to explain to me why the latest post-this-and-that is (for the most part) other than truism, error, or gibberish, and I do not know how to proceed.[38]

Chomsky believes that science is a good way to start understanding history and human affairs:

I think studying science is a good way to get into fields like history. The reason is, you learn what an argument means, you learn what evidence is, you learn what makes sense to postulate and when, what's going to be convincing. You internalize the modes of rational inquiry, which happen to be much more advanced in the sciences than anywhere else. On the other hand, applying relativity theory to history isn't going to get you anywhere. So it's a mode of thinking.[39]

Chomsky has also commented on critiques of "white male science", stating that they are much like the antisemitic and politically motivated attacks against "Jewish physics" used by the Nazis to denigrate research done by Jewish scientists during the *Deutsche Physik* movement:

In fact, the entire idea of "white male science" reminds me, I'm afraid, of "Jewish physics". Perhaps it is another inadequacy of mine, but when I read a scientific paper, I can't tell whether the author is white or is male. The same is true of discussion of work in class, the office, or somewhere else. I rather doubt that the non-white, non-male students, friends, and colleagues with whom I work would be much impressed with the doctrine that their thinking and understanding differ from "white male science" because of their "culture or gender and race." I suspect that "surprise" would not be quite the proper word for their reaction.[40]

Political views

Chomsky at the World Social Forum
(Porto Alegre) in 2003.

Chomsky has stated that his "personal visions are fairly traditional anarchist ones, with origins in The Enlightenment and classical liberalism"[41] and he has praised libertarian socialism.[42] He is a sympathizer of anarcho-syndicalism[43] and a member of the IWW union.[44] He has published a book on anarchism titled, "Chomsky on Anarchism", which was published by the anarchist book collective, AK Press, in 2006.

Noam Chomsky has been engaged in political activism all of his adult life and expressed opinions on politics and world events which are widely cited, publicized and discussed. Chomsky has in turn argued that his views are those which the powerful do not want to hear, and for this reason he is considered an American political dissident. Some highlights of his political views:

- Power, unless justified, is inherently illegitimate. The burden of proof is on those in authority to demonstrate why their elevated position is justified. If this burden can't be met, the authority in question should be dismantled. Authority for its own sake is inherently unjustified. An example of a legitimate authority is that exerted by an adult to prevent a young child from wandering into traffic.[45]
- That there isn't much difference between slavery, and renting one's self to an owner, or "wage slavery." He feels that it is an attack on personal integrity that destroys and undermines our freedoms. He holds workers should own and control their own workplace, a view held (as he notes) by the Lowell Mill Girls.[46]
- Very strong criticisms of the foreign policy of the United States. Specifically, he claims double standards (which he labels "single standard") in a foreign policy preaching democracy and freedom for all, while promoting, supporting and allying itself with non-democratic and repressive organizations and states such as Chile under Augusto Pinochet, and argues that this results in massive human rights violations. He often argues that America's intervention in foreign nations, including the secret aid given to the Contras in Nicaragua, an

event of which he has been very critical, fits any standard description of terrorism.[47]

- He has argued that the mass media in the United States largely serve as a propaganda arm and "bought priesthood"[48] of the U.S. government and U.S. corporations, with the three parties all largely intertwined through common interests. In a famous reference to Walter Lippmann, Chomsky along with his coauthor, Edward S. Herman has written that the American media manufactures consent among the public.
- He has opposed the U.S. global "war on drugs", claiming its language to be misleading, and referring to it as "the war on certain drugs." He favors education and prevention rather than military or police action as a means of reducing drug use.[49] In an interview in 1999, Chomsky argued that, whereas crops such as tobacco receive no mention in governmental exposition, other non-profitable crops, such as marijuana, are specifically targeted due to the effect achieved by persecuting the poor:[50]

  "*US domestic drug policy does not carry out its stated goals, and policymakers are well aware of that. If it isn't about reducing substance abuse, what is it about? It is reasonably clear, both from current actions and the historical record, that substances tend to be criminalized when they are associated with the so-called dangerous classes, that the criminalization of certain substances is a technique of social control.*"[51]

- Critical of the American capitalist system and big business, he describes himself as a libertarian socialist who sympathizes with anarcho-syndicalism and is also critical of Leninist branches of socialism. He also believes that libertarian socialist values exemplify the rational and morally consistent extension of original unreconstructed classical liberal and radical humanist ideas to an industrial context. Specifically he believes that society should be highly organized and based on democratic control of communities and work places. He believes that the radical humanist ideas of his two major influences, Bertrand Russell and John Dewey, were "rooted in the Enlightenment and classical liberalism, and retain their revolutionary character."[52]
- Chomsky has stated that he believes the United States remains the "greatest country in the world"[53], a comment that he later clarified by saying, "Evaluating countries is senseless and I would never put things in those terms, but that some of America's advances, particularly in the area of free speech, that have been achieved by centuries of popular struggle, are to be admired."[54] He has also said "In many respects, the United States is the freest country in the world. I don't just mean in terms of limits on state coercion, though that's true too, but also in terms of individual relations. The United States comes closer to classlessness in terms of interpersonal relations than virtually any society."[55]
- Chomsky is scathing in his opposition to the view that anarchism is inconsistent with support for 'welfare state' measures, stating in part that

One can, of course, take the position that we don't care about the problems people face today, and want to think about a possible tomorrow. OK, but then don't pretend to have any interest in human beings and their fate, and stay in the seminar room and intellectual coffee house with other privileged people. Or one can take a much more humane position: I want to work, today, to build a better society for tomorrow -- the classical anarchist position, quite different from the slogans in the question. That's exactly right, and it leads directly to support for the people facing problems today: for enforcement of health and safety regulation, provision of national health insurance, support systems for people who need them, etc. That is not a sufficient condition for organizing for a different and better future, but it is a necessary condition. Anything else will receive the well-merited contempt of people who do not have the luxury to disregard the circumstances in which they live, and try to survive.[56]

- According to Chomsky: "I'm a boring speaker and I like it that way…. I doubt that people are attracted to whatever the persona is…. People are interested in the issues, and they're interested in the issues because they are important."[57] "We don't want to be swayed by superficial eloquence, by emotion and so on."[58]
- He holds views that can be summarized as anti-war but not strictly pacifist. He prominently opposed the Vietnam War and most other wars in his lifetime. However, he maintains that U.S. involvement in World War II was probably justified, with the caveat that a preferable outcome would have been to end or prevent the war through earlier diplomacy. In particular, he believes that the dropping of nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were "among the most unspeakable crimes in history".[59]
- He has a broad view of free-speech rights, especially in the mass media; he opposes censorship and refuses to take legal action against those who may have libeled him.[60]
- He has made major criticisms of the state of Israel, arguing that Israel's "very clear choice for expansion over security" has brought about a "moral degeneration" in that country, and could lead to its "ultimate destruction".[61]

Chomsky has frequently stated that there is no connection between his work in linguistics and his political views, and is generally critical of the idea that competent discussion of political topics requires expert knowledge in academic fields. In a 1969 interview, he said regarding the connection between his politics and his work in linguistics:

> I still feel myself that there is a kind of tenuous connection. I would not want to overstate it but I think it means something to me at least. I think that anyone's political ideas or their ideas of social organization must be rooted ultimately in some concept of human nature and human needs. (*New Left Review*, 57, Sept. – Oct. 1969, p. 21)

Influence in other fields

Chomskyan models have been used as a theoretical basis in several other fields. The Chomsky hierarchy is often taught in fundamental computer science courses as it

confers insight into the various types of formal languages. This hierarchy can also be discussed in mathematical terms[62] and has generated interest among mathematicians, particularly combinatorialists. Some arguments in evolutionary psychology are derived from his research results.[63]

The 1984 Nobel Prize laureate in Medicine and Physiology, Niels K. Jerne, used Chomsky's generative model to explain the human immune system, equating "components of a generative grammar … with various features of protein structures". The title of Jerne's Stockholm Nobel lecture was "The Generative Grammar of the Immune System".

Nim Chimpsky, a chimpanzee who was the subject of a study in animal language acquisition at Columbia University, was named after Chomsky in reference to his view of language acquisition as a uniquely human ability.

Famous computer scientist Donald Knuth admits to reading Syntactic Structures during his honeymoon and being greatly influenced by it. "…I must admit to taking a copy of Noam Chomsky's Syntactic Structures along with me on my honeymoon in 1961 … Here was a marvelous thing: a mathematical theory of language in which I could use a computer programmer's intuition!".

Another focus of Chomsky's political work has been an analysis of mainstream mass media (especially in the United States), its structures and constraints, and its perceived role in supporting big business and government interests.

Edward S. Herman and Chomsky's book *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (1988) explores this topic in depth, presenting their "propaganda model" of the news media with numerous detailed case studies demonstrating it. According to this propaganda model, more democratic societies like the U.S. use subtle, non-violent means of control, unlike totalitarian systems, where physical force can readily be used to coerce the general population. In an often-quoted remark, Chomsky states that "propaganda is to a democracy what the bludgeon is to a totalitarian state." (Media Control)

The model attempts to explain this perceived systemic bias of the mass media in terms of structural economic causes rather than a conspiracy of people. It argues the bias derives from five "filters" that all published news must "pass through" which combine to systematically distort news coverage.

The first filter, ownership, notes that most major media outlets are owned by large corporations. The second, funding, notes that the outlets derive the majority of their funding from advertising, not readers. Thus, since they are profit-oriented businesses selling a product—readers and audiences—to other businesses (advertisers), the model would expect them to publish news which would reflect the desires and values of those businesses. In addition, the news media are dependent on government institutions and major businesses with strong biases as sources (the third filter) for

much of their information. Flak, the fourth filter, refers to the various pressure groups which attack the media for supposed bias. Norms, the fifth filter, refer to the common conceptions shared by those in the profession of journalism. (Note: in the original text, published in 1988, the fifth filter was "anticommunism". However, with the fall of the Soviet Union, it has been broadened to allow for shifts in public opinion.) The model describes how the media form a decentralized and non-conspiratorial but nonetheless very powerful propaganda system, that is able to mobilize an élite consensus, frame public debate within élite perspectives and at the same time give the appearance of democratic consent.

Chomsky and Herman test their model empirically by picking "paired examples"—pairs of events that were objectively similar except for the alignment of domestic élite interests. They use a number of such examples to attempt to show that in cases where an "official enemy" does something (like murder of a religious official), the press investigates thoroughly and devotes a great amount of coverage to the matter, thus victims of "enemy" states are considered "worthy". But when the domestic government or an ally does the same thing (or worse), the press downplays the story, thus victims of US or US client states are considered "unworthy."

They also test their model against the case that is often held up as the best example of a free and aggressively independent press, the media coverage of the Tet Offensive during the Vietnam War. Even in this case, they argue that the press was behaving subserviently to élite interests.

Academic achievements, awards and honors

In the spring of 1969, he delivered the John Locke Lectures at Oxford University; in January 1970 he delivered the Bertrand Russell Memorial Lecture at University of Cambridge; in 1972, the Nehru Memorial Lecture in New Delhi; in 1977, the Huizinga Lecture in Leiden; in 1988 the Massey Lectures at the University of Toronto titled "Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies". In 1997, The Davie Memorial Lecture on Academic Freedom in Cape Town,[64] among many others.[65]

Chomsky has received many honorary degrees from universities around the world, including the following:

- University of London
- University of Chicago
- Loyola University of Chicago
- Swarthmore College
- University of Delhi
- Bard College
- University of

- University of Buenos Aires
- McGill University
- Universitat Rovira i Virgili
- Columbia University
- Villanova University
- University of Connecticut
- University of Maine

- Universidad de Chile
- University of Bologna
- Universidad de la Frontera
- University of Calcutta
- Universidad Nacional de Colombia
- Vrije Universiteit Brussel
- Santo Domingo Institute of Technology

- Massachusetts
- University of Pennsylvania
- Georgetown University
- Amherst College
- Cambridge University
- Scuola Normale Superiore
- University of Western Ontario
- University of Toronto
- Harvard University
- Uppsala University
- University of Athens
- University of Cyprus

He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the National Academy of Sciences, and the American Philosophical Society. In addition, he is a member of other professional and learned societies in the United States and abroad, and is a recipient of the Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award of the American Psychological Association, the Kyoto Prize in Basic Sciences, the Helmholtz Medal, the Dorothy Eldridge Peacemaker Award, the Ben Franklin Medal in Computer and Cognitive Science, and others.[66] He is twice winner of The Orwell Award, granted by The National Council of Teachers of English for "Distinguished Contributions to Honesty and Clarity in Public Language"[67]

He is a member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Department of Social Sciences.[68]

In 2005, Chomsky received an honorary fellowship from the Literary and Historical Society.

In 2007, Chomsky received The Uppsala University (Sweden) Honorary Doctor's degree in commemoration of Carolus Linnaeus.[69]

In February 2008, he received the President's Medal from the Literary and Debating Society of the National University of Ireland, Galway.

Chomsky was voted the leading living public intellectual in The 2005 Global Intellectuals Poll conducted by the British magazine *Prospect*. He reacted, saying "I don't pay a lot of attention to polls".[70] In a list compiled by the magazine *New Statesman* in 2006, he was voted seventh in the list of "Heroes of our time".[71]

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