

Preface and Acknowledgments

Two huge events, a decade apart from one another, have pushed the technological world in new and unprecedented directions: the 2012 presentation of AlexNet, a revolutionary image recognition system, and the 2022 release of ChatGPT. These innovations, as well as the groups of AI experts who developed them, gave the world a feeling that a new era is here, one that eclipses all past industrial revolutions combined.

At first, images and other visual materials were at the heart of the public discussion of AI; at present, language seems to be centerstage. And here, linguists and linguistics—who have largely remained outside of the engineering enterprise—may have something to contribute. And yet, with few exceptions (e.g., Emily Bender, Roni Katzir, and Gary Marcus), linguists have hardly engaged in any real discussion or debate. A long-time veteran of linguistics and neurolinguistics, I felt fit to jump in, hoping to offer something new. A plan followed, and a generous sabbatical from my home institution enabled me to retreat, first to a huge metropolitan center in Argentina (Buenos Aires), and later to a small town in Germany (Monheim am Rhein). Before long, a book was brewing. I ended up telling a story that begins on October 8, 2024, ends a year earlier to the day, and tours nearly two centuries in the middle.

Writing a book is a marathon—easy at the beginning and yet scary, as your heart is full of self-doubt about whether you’ll make it to the finish line; it gets routinized and rhythmic in the middle; nearer the end, you know it’s yours, but it becomes an unbearably painful and difficult experience. You stick to it, but unlike marathons, no certificates or medals are handed out at the finish line.

I used to be a reasonable sprinter, but I always was a bad long-distance runner. The pain was just too intense for me to bear. But in writing this book,

the pain I endured was converted into joy, thanks to friends, colleagues, and relations on three continents, who came to my rescue as the going got tough. Many were there for me at the crucial junctures: Katrin Amunts, Sebastian Bludau, Amy Brand, Ronit Calderon-Margalit, Anat Caspi, Yinon Cohen, Luka Crnič, Lotem Elber, Danny Fox, Julieta Fumagalli, Virginia Jaichenco, Leo Joskowicz, Gili Laor, Thomas Lippert, Yonatan Loewenstein, Dany Margalit, Shai Moise, Yehonatan (Hilik) Nadav, Eli Nelken, Peter Pieperhoff, Marion Rapp, Beth Rosenberg, Michael Sabel, Anat Saragusti, and Niza Yanay. I deeply appreciate their help and friendship, and I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

I am also most grateful to my computational neuroscientist colleagues at the Edmond and Lily Safra Center for Brain Sciences (ELSC) for strongly disagreeing with me and for asking hard questions, both in person and in correspondence, especially David Beniaguev, Jonathan Kadmon, Yonatan Loewenstein (once again), Mickey London, Aviv Mezer, Idan Segev, and Haim Sompolinsky. Entering this lions' den was most beneficial.

Many thanks go to five helpful MIT Press reviewers, to the Press's editorial staff, to I-An Tan who made the index, and to ELSC's internal grant support, combined with the generous funding received from the European Union's Horizon Europe program under Specific Grant Agreement 101147319 (the EBRAINS 2.0 project) by the Institute for Neurosciences and Medicine (Structural and Functional Organization of the Brain division) of Forschungszentrum Jülich.

Additional thanks go to the audiences in various courses, colloquia, and summer schools on three continents, whose questions and comments helped me sharpen my thinking.

And of course, I would never have written this book without the support of those closest to my heart. Amalya Grodzinsky-Liebermann was there at every juncture and generously contributed not only her love, but also graphic art and wise advice; and Irit Frank was there lovingly, both for me and with me, every single second. I know that I've been very lucky to have them, and I am most grateful to them for their love and support.

This is a section of [doi:10.7551/mitpress/15932.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/15932.001.0001)

How Deeply Human Is Language?

Chomsky, the Brain, and the AI Fantasy

By: Yosef Grodzinsky

Citation:

How Deeply Human Is Language?: Chomsky, the Brain, and the AI Fantasy

By: Yosef Grodzinsky

DOI: 10.7551/mitpress/15932.001.0001

ISBN (electronic): 9780262052023

Publisher: The MIT Press

Published: 2026



The MIT Press

The MIT Press
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
77 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139
mitpress.mit.edu

© 2026 Massachusetts Institute of Technology

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used to train artificial intelligence systems or reproduced in any form by any electronic or mechanical means (including photocopying, recording, or information storage and retrieval) without permission in writing from the publisher.

The MIT Press would like to thank the anonymous peer reviewers who provided comments on drafts of this book. The generous work of academic experts is essential for establishing the authority and quality of our publications. We acknowledge with gratitude the contributions of these otherwise uncredited readers.

This book was set in Stone Serif and Stone Sans by Westchester Publishing Services.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available.

ISBN: 978-0-262-05200-9

EU Authorised Representative: Easy Access System Europe, Mustamäe tee 50, 10621 Tallinn, Estonia | Email: gpsr.requests@easproject.com