

Remarks on Noam

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I still remember sending an email to the MIT linguistics community, asking for a ride from Cambridge to Amherst, and receiving a response from Noam, who offered me a seat in his new Toyota. During the trip, Noam told me, among other things, why he thought Toyota was a good car, how he flew to Vietnam without a visa, why he gave up on phonetics, and how Zellig Harris was as a person and a teacher. I also remember meeting Noam again in Frankfurt several years later, where he gave a speech at a political forum. I was in the audience, sitting in the front row, and in the middle of a sentence about the PR industry undermining the basis of democracy, he recognized and winked at me. I have the video to prove it.

I love Noam. My debt to him is enormous. I am one of those who decided to become a linguist after reading *Syntactic Structures*. I have him to thank for the joy of concentration and discovery which, to me, makes life much more bearable than it otherwise would be. I must also say that what I learn from Noam goes beyond linguistics. His struggle to make society better conveys a notion of kindness, a measure of humanity, which really sticks. I don't agree with Noam on every issue, but I admit I find myself asking "what would he say?" very often, and when I do, it always crosses my mind that there is a possibility, however remote, of flying to wherever he is to ask him this question directly, and I realize how much I wish he would live forever.