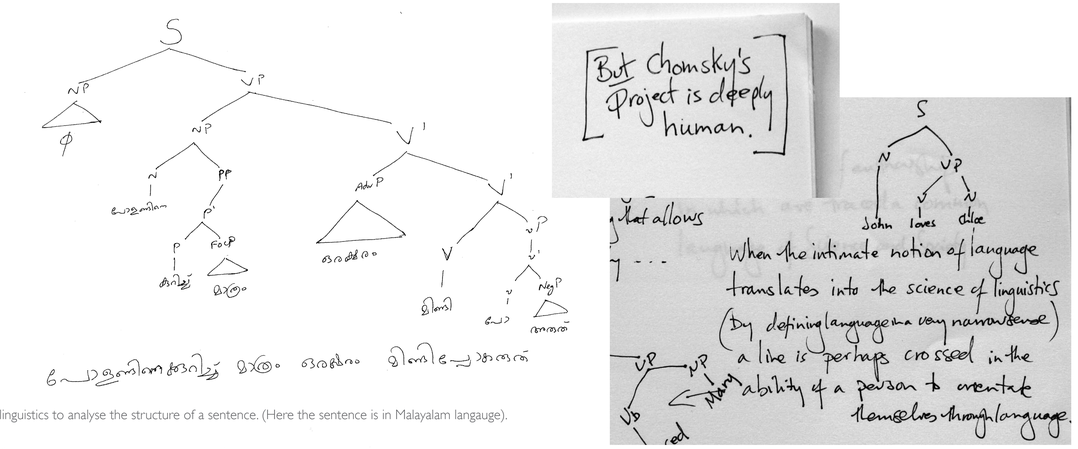
Two researchers – a linguist looking at the study of language as a science and an artist looking at the social domain of space technology – consider the intimate spaces at the core of discussions of science and society, by asking ...

What is a common language that science and society speak?

Certain formulations of science appear at variance with, or directly antithetical to, lived experience. For example, Chomsky's program for studying language (1995) as a scientific object appears as an idea completely in contradiction with what we understand of language in a human setting – as something that allows sharing, communication, sociability, conversation, creative expression, empathy and understanding.



A 'tree diagram' used in linguistics to analyse the structure of a sentence. (Here the sentence is in Malayalam langauge).

Stills from the film *India and Space* (1971) depicting the idea of using space technology to create a rural communication network for India. Directed by Vijay B. Chandra for Films Division India.

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Can a common language for both be found within myriad acts of authorship?

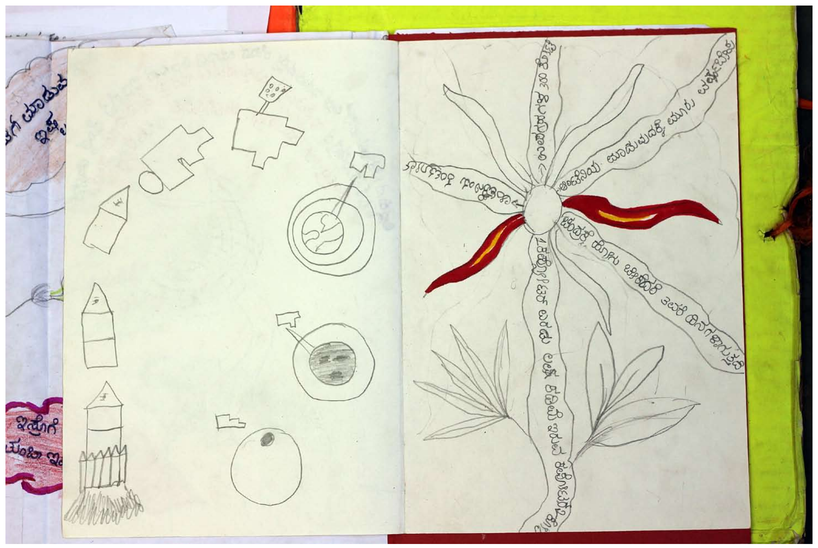
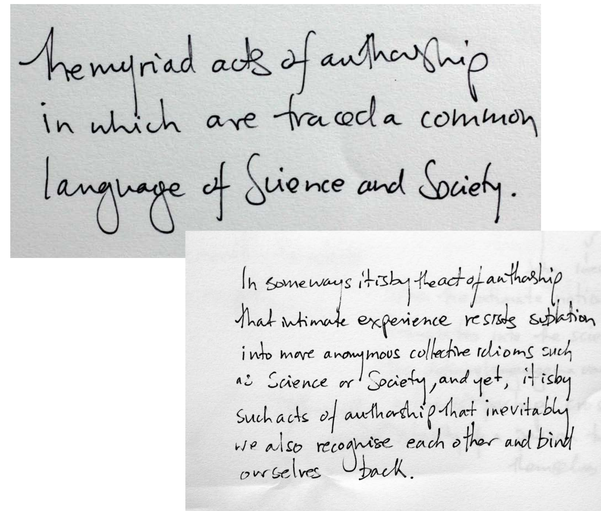


Image drawn by Shivashakti, a pupil from Drishya Learning Centre, Bangalore, after visits to two Indian Space Research Organisation facilities – the Satellite Application Centre and the Deep Space Network. The text (in Kannada language) explains that the spacecraft Chandrayaan took 3 days to reach the Moon, the antenna dish took three years to build and the mission cost was 300 crores Indian Rupees.

Drawings, as acts of authorship, not only trace the presence of creative agencies, but also consciously perform their very existence. Present in the frame of the drawing is a signature of a first-person viewpoint – the signature of an intimate space both open for interpretation and yet profoundly inaccessible. Many kinds of creative practices make authorship visible, leaving a trace. Science also translates the world through acts of authorship (Sarukkai, 2002) leaving traces and signatures, redolent with human meaning.



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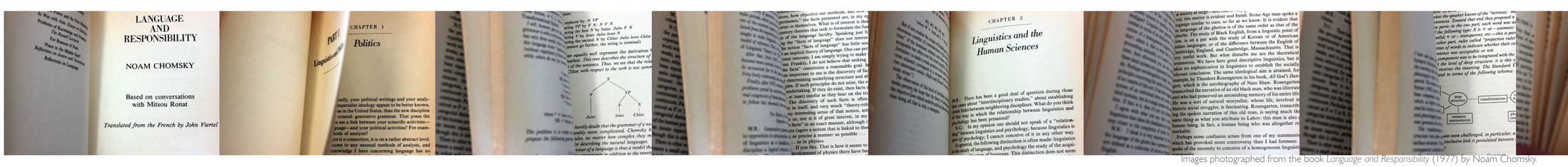
Chomsky, N. (1995) 'Language and Nature'. Mind 104, No. 413.
Sarukkai, S. (2002) *Translating the World: science and language*. Lanham: University Press of America.



Images photographed from the book *Language and Responsibility* (1977) by Noam Chomsky.