The Language Myth: Why Language Is Not an Instinct (2014), by Vyvyan Evans, notes

"We don’t have to assume a special language instinct; we just need to look at the sorts of changes that made us who we are. These new social pressures would have precipitated changes in brain organisation. In time, we would see a capacity for language. Language is, after all, the paradigmatic example of co‑operative behaviour: it requires conventions – norms that are agreed within a community – and it can be deployed to co‑ordinate all the additional complex behaviours that the new niche demanded.

Thee changes paved the way for speech. This allows us to picture the emergence of language as a gradual process from many overlapping tendencies. It might have begun as a sophisticated gestural system, for example, only later progressing to its vocal manifestations. But surely the most profound spur on the road to speech would have been the development of our instinct for co‑operation. By this, I don’t mean to say that we always get on. But we do almost always recognise other humans as minded creatures, like us, who have thoughts and feelings that we can attempt to influence.

We see this instinct at work in human infants as they attempt to acquire their mother tongue. Children have far more sophisticated learning capacities than Chomsky foresaw. They are able to deploy sophisticated intention-recognition abilities from a young age, perhaps as early as nine months old, in order to begin to figure out the communicative purposes of the adults around them. And this is, ultimately, an outcome of our co‑operative minds. Which is not to belittle language: once it came into being, it allowed us to shape the world to our will – for better or for worse. It unleashed humanity’s tremendous powers of invention and transformation. But it didn’t come out of nowhere, and it doesn’t stand apart from the rest of life."