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The most famous paragraph in modern linguistics is from Noam Chomsky's book (MIT Press 1965):

## **ASPECTS OF THE THEORY OF SYNTAX**

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"Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance. This seems to me to have been the position of the founders of modern general linguistics, and no cogent reason for modifying it has been offered. To study actual linguistic performance, we must consider the interaction of a variety of factors, of which the underlying competence of the speaker-hearer is only one. In this respect, study of language is no different from empirical investigation of other complex phenomena."

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*This is from James Kelman's translation.*

Linguistic theory is concerned primarily wi' an ideal speaker-hearer in a completely homogeneous speech community. Whit we mean is that we're thinkin about a bodie that bides in ane airt his hail life like a tattie-bogle, and disnae flit about here and there like a tod skelterin efter a rabbit. Ah mean there's naebody like that, but yese mak on that this body kens his leid perfittly and isnae affectit at aw by being myndless, forgettles, hivin shifts of attention an interest, an makin wee errors (random or teepical). That seems tae me whit a' the high hied yins have aye argued, an naebody's ivver said onythin agin it. If yese wantin' tae study actual linguistic performance – the real Mackay, the hail jing-bang, the complete rickmattick – like how fowk jist shout at thair bairns, or blether oan to the wifie, or yak awa about fitba' to thair cronies doon the pub – ye'll hivtae leuk at aw kynd of factors, an thair linguistic knowledge is anely a wee pairt. Tae study a leid isnae different frae the empirical study of aw ither quirkie things. ... But if yese think about it – that's no the way Chomsky talks, is it? See, Chomsky and me, he's a

genius, and ah'm a genius: we're both "homo genius", but we're no "homogeneous", yknowwhatahmean? So, ye'll need tae pit oan yer thinkin cap, and come up wi a better theory. That's a right scunner, eh? And while we're at it, we'll retitile the book: *Just a Few Wee Aspects of One Particular Theory of Syntax*.

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***This is from James Joyce's translation.***

languagerun, past Eve and Adam's first ever languagedone, lingual theory most emulously concerned to capturing an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogenius speech-community, who knows its (the speech-community's and all who sail in her) language perfitly even and not only aprioric roots for aposteriorious tongues and is unaffected in effect and in fact in the Grandmère des Grammaires or by such irrelevant conditions as to the best of his mememormee schemado, distractions (as though trinitatis kink had mudded his dome), shifts of interest (and stand-to-attention!), and terrors (queer quick twists of random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of this language in a command performance. This seems to me to have been the position of the farthest of the farther of the founding fathers of modern general linguistics, who were working out a quantum theory for the most tantumising state of affairs, a theory none too rectiline of the evolution of human society, and no cogent reason for modifaturing it has been offered up missas for vows. To study an actual and effectual linguistic performance, we must consider the interaction of an every-tale-a-treat-in-itself variety of factors, of which the underlying competence of the speaker-hearer is only one so weenybeeney-veenyteeny one. In this respect, study of languagedone is no different from empirical investigation of other complex phenomena (such as bababadalgharaghtakamminarronkonnbronntonnerronntuonnthunntrovarrhounawnskawntoohoohoordeenenthur — nuk!).