**HÉCTOR INÉS FILGUEIRA**

**THE FIRST WORD**

**SUMMARY BY CHAPTERS**

-Chapter 1

In this chapter we read about the way Chomsky gives conferences. Those conferences tend to be monotonous and even boring. Chomsky remains still and speaks with very low tones, making the audience find no interest on his speeches. The people who go to Chomsky´s conferences turn with his partner for paying attention, so while one of them is sleeping, the other one is paying attention.

He is not so monotonous only giving speeches but as well in his day a day. Chomsky claimed that all humans share a “universal grammar” and ever since then, linguistics had to follow his theories. Chomsky was elected the world´s top intelectual.

For Chomsky, the grammar was a theory of the language. The language is a set of sentences, and the job of a grammar is to generate all of the language´s allowable sentences.

Skinner was well-known for his theory of behaviorism which says that all animals, humans included, are like machines as you can control their behaviour (we always respond automatically). Skinner suggested that language is a simple behaviour, but Chomsky dismisses this as absurd.

For Chomsky, the language is adquired in the children´s everyday life. He also says that children are born with a mental component that helps them learn the language.

A lot of people describe Chomsky as “the linguistic freedom figther”.

Chomsky believed that ideas were divided in two kinds: competence and performance. Competence, which includes syntax, is the innate basis of language; and performance includes whatever is individual or context-specific.

In 1950s there were two theories. On one hand, linguistics believed that the systems of language had their own subsystems. Critics said the brain would bulge or recede these areas, depending on how developed a given trait was.

Chomsky published “Syntactic Structures and Aspects”. Chomsky´s reputation started to grow within linguistics philosophy and spread into many other fields. People accused him of abandoning ideas that he once promoted.

In the earlest theories children were born with innate and very specific rules for languages. Chomsky put a lot of emphasis on both the complex nature of language and the fact that the human brain was especially designed to develop.

In the 1980s Chomsky acknowledged that language must have given us some kind of evolutionary advantage but its origins were more likely to have been accidental than the result of a slow evolutionary change.

Sue Savage-Rumbaugh was against Chomsky, and she tried to give a different explanation for language development.

-Chapter 2

In this chapter we learn that human and apes react in the same way to certain situations.

Sue Savage-Rumbaugh wasn´t the first person to study whether apes can communicate, but she and “Kanzi” were the first ones to show that apes can learn languages through a picture keyboard. From that moment, bonobos were taught languages sorrounded by a language-rich enviroment. We are also told about the experiments of Lyn, who worked with dolphins, and the ones carried out by Allan and Beatrix Gardner, which showed that apes were better speakers by using gestures.

It wasn´t until the 1970s that Herb Terrace, after experimenting with an ape, showed that bonobos weren´t really communicating, they were actually being cued by their handlers. This made a great impact on science and caused a decrease on the fundings this field had, but luckily, Sue had enough fundings to keep studying and to show that memory is a crucial element of language use.

Criticism of ape languages more motivated to discredit than evaluate and it seems that they have already made up their minds before hearing what they are told. Ape language research, and Kanzi in particular, opened one fascinating window into the problems of language evolution.

-Chapter 3

In this chapter we are introduced to Paul Bloom, who was doing research in child language development. He didn´t believe in language as something based on the evolution until he met Leda Cosmides, a prominent evolutionary psichologyst. Paul and many others believed that if Chomky said that language was innate, no evolutionary proccess should have happened. In fact, Paul wrote to Massimo Piatelli-Palmarini,a friend of his who agreed with Leda Cosmides, in order to show him that his receantly published article wasn´t right. Massimo´s answer was shocking for Bloom. From that moment, Paul started to see that many other scientifics believed in evolution.

Afterwards, we are given some information about The “Stephen Jay Gould line”, in which he explains his theory about evolution. Goul said that language might be a sprangle. Then we are told about Pinker´s career and what his office looks like. Pinker, Bloom and Chomsky finally get to be in agreement about language after some time and after having written several letters.

Later we see that Pinker and bloom before launching their study, they argue about the complexity of language and about how children learn it. They compare the evolution of the humane ye to the evolution of language.

Pinker and Bloom argued with Chomsky and Gould about the evolution of language. After the talk, they made some changes on their paper and sent it to a scientific magazine, which published it a year later, attached with some commentaries made by other scientist. Despite of this, its book had a great impact on people.

-Chapter 4

Chomsky states that language is innate. For many linguists, language was endowed to the human kind through a gene or genes specifically made for language. Philip Lieberman disagreed with Chomsky, and he considered that language is grounded in the basic tenets of messy biology.

Lieberman realized that nonhumans don´t speak because the mouth and tongue will never be able to make the sounds we do.

In his first book, called “The biology and Evolution of Language”,he argued against the popular nation that there was a “linguistic saltation”. In his book, he explains that human linguistic ability evolved, by means of Darwinian processes, that the biological substrate for human linguistic ability is subject to the constraints of biology, in particular variation; and that data from psycholinguistics, anthropology, neurophysiology, and so forth, are germane.

For Lieberman, Chomsky was wrong about language because he fell into a larger category of misunderstanding biology.

According to Lieberman, the basal ganglial are crucial in regulating speech and language. The basal glandial are implicated in the evolutionary trajectory that led to language.