**Linguistics**

**Third Year**

.**Collected by Dr. Suha Rasheed Hamad**

**The First Lecture**

**The Origins of Language**

Language is one of the most important tools for humans and it is one among other things that makes us different from other vertebrates and mammals. The specialists in linguistics tried long ago to find the main source of the language and how there are many languages around the world. We simply don’t have a definitive answer to the question of how language originated. We do know that the ability to produce sound and simple vocal patterning (a hum versus a grunt, for example) appears to be in an ancient part of the brain that we share with all vertebrates, including fish, frogs, birds and other mammals. But that isn’t a human language. We suspect that some type of spoken languages must have been developed between 100,000 and 50,000 years ago, well before written language (about 5,000 years ago). Yet, among the traces of earlier periods of life on earth, we never find any direct evidence or artifacts relating to the speech of our distant ancestors that might tell us how language was back in the early stages, hence the multiple speculations. Since that we don’t have a direct answer of how the language originated, the scholars of languages tried to came up with the most specific answer of how the language was originated, so they offer different theories that gives a logical explanation of how the languages are made. All the theories included in this lecture are speculations and non of them gives the correct answer about the origin of languages.

**The divine source.**

In most religions, it appears to be a divine source, which provides humans with language. In the biblical tradition, as described in the book of Genesis, God created Adam and “whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.” Alternatively, following a Hindu tradition, it is Sarasvati, wife of Brahma, who is credited with bringing language to humanity. In an attempt to rediscover this original divine language, a few experiments have been carried out, with rather conflicting results. The basic hypothesis seems to have been that, if human infants were allowed to grow up without hearing any language around them, then they would spontaneously begin to use the original God-given language. The Greek writer Herodotus reported the story of an Egyptian pharaoh named Psammetichus (or Psamtik) who tried the experiment with two newborn babies more than 2,500 years ago. After two years of isolation except for the company of goats and a mute shepherd, the children were reported to have spontaneously uttered, not an Egyptian word, but something that was identified as the Phrygian word bekos, meaning “bread.” The pharaoh concluded that Phrygian, an older language spoken in part of what is modern Turkey, must be the original language. That seems very unlikely.The children may not have picked up this “word” from any human source, but as several commentators have pointed out, they must have heard what the goats were saying. (First remove the -kos ending, which was added in the Greek version of the story, then pronounce be- as you would the English word bed without -d at the end. Can you hear a goat?). King James the Fourth of Scotland carried out a similar experiment around the year 1500 and the children were reported to have spontaneously started speaking Hebrew, confirming the king’s belief that Hebrew had indeed been the language of the Garden of Eden. About a century later, the Mogul emperor Akbar the Great also arranged for newborn babies to be raised in silence, only to find that the children produced no speech at all. It is unfortunate that Akbar’s result is more in line with the real-world outcome for children who have been discovered living in isolation, without coming into contact with human speech.Very young children living without access to human language in their early years grow up with no language at all. This was true of Victor, the wild boy of Aveyron in France, discovered near the end of the eighteenth century, and also of Genie, an American child whose special life circumstances came to light in the 1970s (see Chapter 12). From this type of evidence, there is no “spontaneous” language. If human language did emanate from a divine source, we have no way of reconstructing that original language, especially given the events in a place called Babel, “because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth,” as described in Genesis (11: 9).

**The natural sound source.**

The human auditory system is already functioning before birth (at around seven months). That early processing capacity develops into an ability to identify sounds in the environment, allowing humans to make a connection between a sound and the thing producing that sound. This leads to the idea that primitive words derive from imitations of the natural sounds that early men and women heard around them. This theory has two main ideas.

The “Bow-Wow” Theory:

The early human tried to imitate the sounds of animals and objects around them and then used them to refer to those objects and animals even when they weren’t present. What make us think about this theory is that in all modern languages have some words with pronunciations that seem to echo naturally occurring sounds could be used to support this theory. In English we have splash, bang, boom, rattle, buzz, hiss, screech and of course bow-wow. Words that sound similar to the noises they describe are examples of onomatopoeia. the defect in this idea that it is hard to see how most of the soundless things (e.g. “low branch”) as well as abstract concepts (e.g. “truth”) could have been referred to in a language that simply echoed natural sounds.

The “Pooh-Pooh” Theory:

This theory says that the speech developed from the instinctive sounds people make in emotional circumstances. That is, the original sounds of language may have come from natural cries of emotion such as pain, anger and joy. By this route, presumably, Ouch! came to have its painful connotations. But Ouch! and other interjections such as Ah!, Ooh!, Phew!, Wow! or Yuck! are usually produced with sudden intakes of breath, which is the opposite of ordinary talk. We normally produce spoken language as we breathe out, so we speak while we exhale, not inhale.

**The Musical source.**

The Musical Source: is a theory that suggests human communication began through melodies and rhythms before the development of language and words. The source informs us about the role of natural sounds in the development of language, suggesting that early humans may have used melodies and rhythms to communicate before developing the ability to express themselves with words. It highlights that infants can process and produce sounds before acquiring language, reflecting that musical ability evolved before the ability to speak. The text also cites Charles Darwin's hypothesis, which proposes that early human ancestors may have attempted to "charm" each other through musical tones. This idea challenges the traditional image of early humans and emphasizes the complexity of their social interactions.

**The social Interaction source.**

The "yo-he-ho" theory.

proposed by Jespersen in 1922 explains that sounds produced during physical effort, such as coordinating between members of a group in a shared activity, may have contributed to the emergence of language. Early humans may have used grunts and curses while performing physical tasks like carrying trees or large animals.

The advantage of this theory is that it links the development of language to a social context, as early humans lived in groups for protection and cooperation.

Communication among group members was necessary to maintain this social system, even if it was through simple sounds like grunts or curses. However, this theory does not fully explain the origin of these sounds, especially since some animals, like apes, use social sounds but have not developed language as humans have.

**The Physical Adaptation Source.**

Instead of looking at types of sounds as the source of human speech, we can look at the types of physical features humans possess. our ancestors made a major transition to an upright posture, with bi-pedal (on two feet) locomotion. This really changed how we breathe. There are certain physical features that are streamlined versions of features found in other primates. By themselves, such features would not guarantee speech, but they are good clues that a creature with such features probably has the capacity for speech.

Teeth and Lips.

Human teeth are upright, not slanting outwards like those of apes. They are also much smaller. Such characteristics are not very useful for ripping or tearing food and seem better adapted for grinding and chewing. They are also very helpful in making sounds such as f or v.

Human lips have much more intricate muscle interlacing than is found in other primates, and their resulting flexibility certainly helps in making sounds like p, b and m.

Mouth and Tongue.

The human mouth is relatively small compared to other primates and can be opened and closed rapidly. Humans have a shorter, thicker and more muscular tongue that can be used to shape a wide variety of sounds inside the oral cavity. humans can close off the airway through the nose to create more air pressure in the mouth.

Larynx and Pharynx.

In the course of human physical development, the assumption of an upright posture moved the head more directly above the spinal column and the larynx dropped to a lower position. . This created a longer cavity called the pharynx, above the vocal folds, which acts as a resonator for increased range and clarity of

the sounds produced via the larynx. One unfortunate consequence of this development is that the lower position of the human larynx makes it much more possible for the human to choke on pieces of food.

The Tool-Making Source.

there is evidence that humans had developed preferential right-handedness and had become capable of making stone tools. Tool making, or the outcome of manipulating objects and changing them using both hands, is evidence of a brain at work.

The Human Brain

It has specialized functions in each of the two hemispheres Those functions that control the motor movements involved in complex vocalization (speaking) and object manipulation (making or using tools) are very close to each other in the left hemisphere of the brain. That is, the area of the motor cortex that controls the muscles of the arms and hands is next to the articulatory muscles of the face, jaw and tongue. It may be that there was an evolutionary connection between the language-using and tool-using abilities of humans and that both were involved in the development of the speaking brain. If we think in terms of the most basic process involved in primitive tool-making, it is not enough to be able to grasp one rock (make one sound); the human must also bring another rock (other sounds) into contact with the first in order to develop a tool.