

HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE

Origin of language

The scholars draw evidence from **the fossil record, archaeological evidence, contemporary language diversity, studies of language acquisition and comparisons between human language and systems of communication existing among animals.**

The Linguistic Society of Paris banned any existing or future debates on the subject in 1866 due to shortage of empirical evidence.

Approaches to the origin of language according assumptions

"Continuity theories" - it must have **evolved from** earlier pre-linguistic systems among **our primate ancestors.**

"Discontinuity theories" - It must have appeared fairly **suddenly during the course of human evolution.**

An innate faculty—It largely **genetically encoded.**

Cultural system—It learned **through social interaction.**

Noam Chomsky, a proponent of discontinuity theory, argues that a single chance mutation occurred in one individual in the order of **100,000 years ago, installing the language faculty in "perfect" or "near-perfect" form.**

Charles Darwin in his **The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex** states that **“I cannot doubt that language owes its origin to the imitation and modification, aided by signs and gestures, of various natural sounds, the voices of other animals, and man's own instinctive cries.”**

Books related to origin of language

1. William Dwight Whitney's *Max Muller and the Science of Language* -- 1892
2. Edward Thorndike's *Science* piece reviewed these theories and he also had his own theory of the origins of language - 1943.
3. Adam Smith also had a theory of the origins of language: *Considerations concerning the first formation of languages.*
4. Corballis, M. *The Recursive Mind: The Origins of Human Language, Thought and Civilization.*

5. Jean-Louis Dessalles' *Why We Talk: The Evolutionary Origins of Language*.- 2007
6. Noam Chomsky's Language and other cognitive systems: What is special about language? -2011
7. Here's Tecumseh Fitch's piece on —Musical protolanguage: Darwin's theory of language evolution revisited. ||

German philologist and Historical linguist **Max Muller** published a list of speculative theories concerning the origins of spoken language in **1861**.

They are

1. **DING-DONG** theory:

Ding - Dong theory is propounded by Maxmuller. The —**ding-dong**” hypothesis **bases the origins of language on onomatopoeia.** It states that language began when humans started naming objects after **a relevant sound that was already involved in their everyday life.** It is **mimicry of the natural resonance of things.** **Rhythm is associated in this theory.**

This theory, favored by ancient philosophers Plato and Pythagoras, maintains that speech arose in response to the essential qualities of objects in the environment.

The idea that speech reflects some mystical natural resonance or harmony connected with things like movement of sound in the world.

Examples: “boom,” “crash,” and “oink.”

2. **POOH-POOH** theory:

Pooh - Pooh theory was **Propounded by Max Muller.** **This theory holds that speech originated with interjections—spontaneous cries of pain (“Ouch!”), surprise (“Oh!”), and other emotions (“Yabba dabba do!”).**

The basis for the “**pooh-pooh**” hypothesis holds true to **the involuntary nature of human speech.** **It is an emotional response.** It is commonly used to denoted **crying on pain and happiness or laughter,** respectively, would then develop into a more unique and case-specific series of sounds in association with other emotions and interactions.

Examples: —wawawall, —ha haha, ||

3. **BOW-WOW** theory:

Bow - Wow theory is propounded by Max Muller

The “**bow wow**” hypothesis states that human language and **vocabulary originated as a form of imitation**. It is said that **language came from the imitation of animal sounds**.

Examples: Bow-wow, moo, baa, meow, splash, cuckoo, *and* bang. *etc.* A lot of words that describe animal sounds in different languages are similar. **4.Yo-he-ho**

theory

This theory is **Propounded by Max Muller**. It states that **speech started with the rhythmic chants and grunts people used to coordinate their physical actions when they worked together**. The idea that **speech emerged from the sounds of inspired playfulness, love, poetic sensibility, and song**.

5.The La-La Theory

Danish linguist Otto Jespersen suggested that language may have developed from sounds associated with love, play, and (especially) song.

6.Ta - Ta Theory is propounded by Richard Paget

Sir Richard Paget was a British amateur scientific investigator. He specialised in speech science and the origin of speech. He published a book *‘Human Speech’* on these topics, in 1930. He developed a manually coded sign language system

The “**ta-ta**” hypothesis states that language and the **development of sound was generated to support the hand gestures and movements of the individual**.

The idea that **speech came from the use of tongue and mouth gestures to mimic manual gestures**.

Example: saying ta-ta is like waving goodbye with your tongue.

In some places nodding means —yes,|| in others nodding means the opposite. Such distinct cultural differences imply that this is not a sound hypothesis.

The 'mother tongues' hypothesis: The "mother tongues" hypothesis was proposed in 2004. W. Tecumseh Fitch suggested that the Darwinian principle of 'kin selection' the convergence of genetic interests between relatives. He suggests that languages were originally 'mother tongues'.

The 'obligatory reciprocal altruism' hypothesis: It explains the unusually high levels of intentional honesty necessary for language to evolve.

The gossip and grooming hypothesis: Robin Dunbar in his book **Grooming, Gossip and the Evolution of Language** states that it allows individuals to service their relationships and so maintain their alliances on the basis of the principle: if you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours.

Ritual/speech coevolution: The ritual/speech coevolution theory was originally proposed by **Roy Rappaport**. He states that there can be **no such thing as a 'theory of the origins of language'**. Language is **not a separate adaptation but an internal aspect of something much wider, human symbolic culture as a whole**.

'Non-existence' hypothesis: According to **Chomsky's single mutation theory**, the emergence of language resembled the formation of a crystal; with digital infinity as the seed crystal in a super-saturated primate brain, on the verge of blossoming into the human mind, by physical law, once evolution added a single small but crucial keystone.

The Romulus and Remus hypothesis: The **Romulus and Remus hypothesis** was proposed by neuroscientist **Andrey Vyshedskiy**. This hypothesis proposes that there were **two phases** that led to modern recursive language. In linguistics, **recursion is the ability to repeat a rule indefinitely**. Example, a simple sentence in English may have the form: **Noun +Verb**

Putting the baby down theory:

According to **Dean Falk's** 'putting the baby down' theory, **vocal interactions between early hominid mothers and infants sparked a sequence of events that led to our ancestors' earliest words**.

From where to what theory:

The 'from where to what' model is a language evolution model that is derived primarily from **the organization of language processing in the brain and two of its structures: the auditory dorsal stream and the auditory ventral stream**.

Grammaticalisation theory: 'Grammaticalisation' is a continuous historical process in which free-standing words develop into grammatical appendages. An **initially 'incorrect' usage, in becoming accepted, leads to unforeseen consequences**, triggering knock-on effects and extended sequences of change.

Gestural theory: The gestural theory of language evolution states that the languages that humans speak today arose from an earlier form of communication that was expressed primarily through arm and hand gestures.

Wilhelm Wundt and Sir Richard Paget developed and advanced this theory. Gesture theorists believe that primitive people communicated with one another through hand

gestures,

Two scenarios have been proposed for the development of language to support the gestural theory.

1. **Language developed from the calls of our ancestors.**
2. **Language was derived from gesture.**

Gesture

A gesture is a form of non-verbal communication or non vocal communication. The visible bodily actions communicate particular messages either in place of or in conjunction with speech. **Gestures include movement of the hands, face, or other parts of the body.**

Gesture processing takes place in Broca's and Wernicke's areas of the brain, used by speech and sign language.

The language has evolved in **Homo sapiens** from an earlier system consisting of manual gestures. **Abbé de Condillac evolved the term Gestural Theory** and has been revived by anthropologist Gordon W. Hewes.

Roman Rhetorician, **Marcus Quintilianus studied in his Institution Oratoria on how gesture can be used on rhetorical discourses.**

English physician and Baconian natural philosopher, **John Bulwer wrote five works exploring human communications pertaining to gestures.** He analyzed dozens of gestures and provided a book **Chirologia on hand gestures.**

Italian antiquarian, **Andrea De Jorio published an extensive account of gesture expressions.**

American psychologist, Andrew N. Meltzoff conducted a study on the imitation of facial and manual gestures by newborns. **He says that gestures directly transfer thoughts into visible forms, showing that ideas and language cannot always be express.**

David McNeill wrote that "gestures do not simply form a part of what is said, but have an impact on thought itself."

The International Society for Gesture Studies was founded in 2002.

Adam Kendon and Cornelia Muller published a peer-reviewed journal Gesture. Adam Kendon was the first to hypothesize that Lexical gestures work to amplify or modulate the lexico-semantic content of the verbal speech.

Goldin Meadow and Brentari said that communicating through sign language is no different from spoken language.

Communicative gesture and informative gesture

The first way to **distinguish between categories of gesture is to differentiate between communicative gesture and informative gesture.**

The informative-communicative gesture focuses on intentionality of meaning and **communication in co-speech gesture.**

Informative gestures are passive gestures that provide information about the speaker as a person and not about what the speaker is trying to communicate.

Communicative gestures are gestures that are produced intentionally and meaningfully by a person as a way of intensifying or modifying speech produced in the vocal tract or with the hands in the case of sign languages, even though a speaker may not be actively aware that they are producing communicative gestures.

Body language

Body language is a form of non-verbal communication that allows visual cues that transmit messages without speaking. **Barbara Pease and Allan Pease's book "The Definitive Book of Body Language"** said that everyone does a shoulder shrug, a gesture signifying that the person is not comprehending what they are supposed to be understood and showing the palms of both hands to show a person is not hiding anything, and raising the eyebrows to indicate a greeting.

Manual gestures are divided into four distinct categories:

1. Symbolic (Emblematic),
2. Deictic (Indexical),
3. Motor (Beat) and
4. Lexical (Iconic)

Symbolic (Emblematic)

The most familiar are the emblems or quotable gestures. These are conventional, culture-specific gestures that can be used as replacement for words, such as the hand wave used for **"hello" and "goodbye"**.

Deictic (indexical)

Deictic gestures can occur simultaneously with vocal speech or in place of it. Deictic gestures are gestures that consist of indicative or pointing motions. These gestures often work in the same way as demonstrative words and pronouns

like "this" or "that". It is a common group of gestures. **Deictic gestures can refer to concrete or intangible objects or people. Eg: *here, you, me, that one there, or next Tuesday***

Motor (beat)

Motor or beat gestures usually consist of short, repetitive, rhythmic movements that are closely tied with prosody in verbal speech. Beat gestures cannot occur independently of verbal speech and convey no semantic information.

These gestures are closely coordinated with speech. The beat gestures are used in conjunction with speech and keep time with the rhythm of speech to emphasize certain words or phrases.

Lexical (iconic)

Iconic gestures are more full of content and may echo, or elaborate, the meaning of the co-occurring speech. They depict aspects of spatial images, actions, people, or objects. A gesture that depicts the act of throwing may be synchronous with the utterance, "He threw the ball right into the window."

Lexical gestures, like motor gestures, cannot occur independently of verbal speech.

Roel Willems and Peter Hagoort said that both gestures and language contribute to the understanding and decoding of a speaker's encoded message.

American linguist Noam Chomsky proposed the idea that a random evolutionary change occurred in the human brain that subsequently became an on switch for languages. He suggests that before these changes the human brain did not have the capabilities for language, but this random mutation or change enabled them.

SELF TEST QUESTIONS

1. An example of Onomatopoeia is
A) Giggle B) Take C) Boot D) Limit
2. Which of the following theories of the origin of human speech is based on the imitation of sounds of creatures or objects?
A) The Ding-dong theory
B) The Pooh-pooh theory
C) The Bow-wow theory
D) The Gesture theory
3. The falls back on the tendency of imitation of movement.
A) Ding-Dong Theory
B. pooh-Pooh Theory
C. Ta-Ta Theory
D. Bow-Wow Theory.

4. Rhythm is associated with:
 A) Pooh – pooh theory
 B. bow – Bow theory
 C. ding – dong theory
 D. gesture theory.
5. God created Adam and —whatever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereofll supports the view that language originated from
 A) The natural – sound source
 B) The oral gesture source
 C) The divine source
 D) Glossogenetics
6. This theory holds that the beginnings of language are to be found in the sense of rhythm which seems to have been innate in man from a very primitive stage of his existence and by which he is related to the rest of the universe.
 A)The ding-dong Theory
 B)The pooh pooh Theory
 C)The gesture Theory
 D)The bow-wow Theory
7. The _____ theory is associated with the name of the eminent German Scholar and philologist Max Muller.
 A : The bow-wow theory
 B : The ding-dong theory
 C : The pooh-pooh theory
 D : The gesture theory
8. The ding-dong theory is usually associated with the name of the eminent German scholar and philologist.
 A : Wilhelm Wundt
 B : Richard Paget
 C : Max Muller
 D : Sir Percy Nunn
9. What is the correct chronological order of the publication of the following?
 (a) German Grammar (Jacob Grimm)
 (b) Comparative Grammar of Sanskrit, Zend, Greek Latin, Lithuanian, Gothic and German (Franz Bopp)
 (c) An Investigation into the Origin of Old Norse or Icelandic Language (Rasmus Rask)
 (d) Concerning the Conjugation System of the Sanskrit Language in Comparison with those of the Greek, Latin, Persian and German Language (Franz Bopp)
 (A) (a), (b), (c) and (d)
 (B) (b), (c), (d) and (a)
 (C) (c), (d), (a) and (b)
 (D) (d), (c), (b) and (a)
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