

4.5 Pragmatics: Pragmatics is the study of the meaning of utterances in context. For example, the sentence *It's cold in here* could be interpreted as “close the windows” in certain contexts or situations.

Lecture № 02: Theories of the Origin of Language

1. The Divine Source Theory

In most religions, it is believed that language is a God-given gift to human species. In Christianity, God gave Adam the kingdom of all animals in the Garden of Eden and the first thing Adam did was to name these animals. That is how language started according to religious sources. Today people speak many different languages rather than only one language because ancient humans became too proud and they tried to build the Tower of Babel in order to reach God. So, God punished them by separating their languages. Alternatively, following a Hindu tradition, language came from Sarasvati, wife of Brahma, creator of the universe.

2. The Natural Sound Source Theory

a) The “bow-wow” Theory

When different objects flew by, making a *Caw-Caw* or *Coo-Coo* sound, the early human tried to imitate the sounds and then used them to refer to those objects even when they weren't present. The fact that all modern languages have some words with pronunciations that seem to echo naturally occurring sounds could be used to support this theory. In English, in addition to cuckoo, we have splash, bang, boom, rattle, buzz, hiss, screech, and of course bow-wow.

b) Ding Dong Theory

According to this theory, language has originated in the sense of rhythm innate in man. This theory stresses the rhythmical nature of the universe and the sense of rhythm innate in human beings. This theory is based on man's tendency to imitate not sounds but movements in nature. The primitive man having observed the rhythm in the flowing of stream and the swaying of the trees in the wind must have “ding-donged” phonetically to them, partly by the way of accomplishment and partly in imitation. Every sensory expression that primitive man received from nature must have found expression from vocal sounds or ding-dongs, like the striking of the bell.

c) The “Pooh-Pooh” Theory

According to this theory, the origin of language is to be traced to the involuntary exclamations of pain, surprise, pleasure or wonder. The upholders of this theory say that language is only a refinement upon our emotional interjections like “ah!”, “ha!”, “vow!” etc. This theory derives its name from the expression

“pooh-pooh” which is often used as an exclamation of contempt or disgust. The expression has come to acquire a definite meaning. The verb “to pooh-pooh” has become accepted in ordinary usage. It is used with the meaning of belittling somebody or something. The supporters of theory believe that all language originated in this way.

3. The Social Interaction Source Theory

Another proposal involving natural sounds was nicknamed the “yo-he-ho” theory. The idea is that the sounds of a person involved in physical effort could be the source of our language, especially when that physical effort involved several people and the interaction had to be coordinated. So, a group of early humans might develop a set of hums, grunts, groans and curses that were used when they were lifting and carrying large bits of trees or lifeless hairy mammoths. So, human sounds, however they were produced, must have had some principled use within the life and social interaction of early human groups. This is an important idea that may relate to the uses of humanly produced sounds.

4. The Gesture Theory

The proponents of this theory believe that every human gesture is followed by movements of tongue, the lips and the jaws. Most primitive means of communication among human being was by means of gesture made with hand. The sign language is still employed by us when we have to communicate with a deaf person or with a person whose language is not known to us. We beckon with hand when we want him or her to come to us. Similarly we nod the head in agreement and shake it from side to side when we want to express disagreement. The upholders of this theory argue that a gesture by hand is usually accompanied by a corresponding movement of the vocal organs.

5. Glossogenetics

Our ancestors became bipedal (standing and walking on their two legs) about 3.5 million years ago. When these humans could stand on their two legs, their larynx (a speech organ behind Adam’s apple in the human throat) changed in a way to allow humans to produce vowel and consonant sounds in human languages. Human language developed as a result of this evolutionary change.

Lecture № 03: Nonverbal and Verbal Communication

A. Communication

Communication is defined as the transfer of meaning from one mind to another. It is a sharing of meaning through the transmission of information via mutually understood signs. Because meanings exist in the human mind, they cannot be shared or communicated except through some external vehicle. The human