

LANGUAGE & LINGUISTICS



Language and Linguistics

THE ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE

We simply do not know how language originated. We do not know that spoken language developed well before written language. Yet we have no physical evidence relating to the speech of our ancestors and because of this absence of evidence speculations about the origins of human speech have been developed.

The Divine Source

The basic idea of the theory is that : “ If infants were allowed to grow up without hearing any language, then they would spontaneously begin using the original God-given language. “

The Natural Sound Source

“

Primitive words could have been imitations of the natural sounds which early men and women heard around them “
Examples : cuckoo, splash, bang, boom. This view has been called “ bow-wow theory “ of language origin and these words echoing nature sounds are called “ onomatopoeic words “



A similar suggestion : “ The original sounds of language came from naturel cries of emotion such as pain, anger and joy.

Examples : Ouch! , Ah!, Hey!

Yo-heave-ho Theory

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 had to be coordinated.

The importance of yo-heave-ho theory is that it places the development of human language in some .

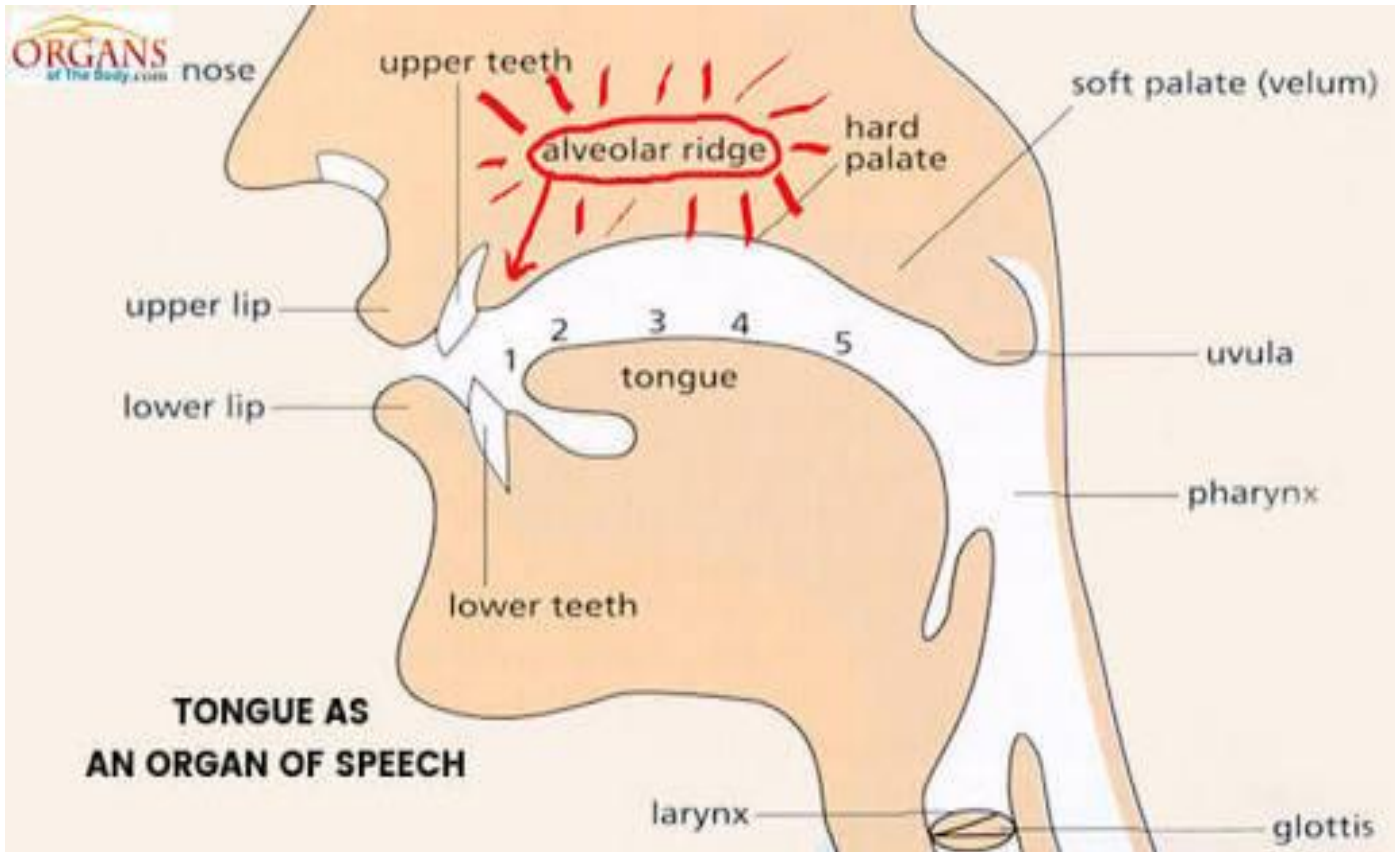
The theory comes from the idea that there is a link between physical gesture and orally produced sounds. First of all a set of physical gestures was developed as a means of communication. Then a set of oral gestures specially involving the mouth developed in which the movements of the tongue, lips and so on were recognized according to patterns of movement similar to physical gestures.

Glossogenetics

The focus is on the biological basis of the formation. In the evolutionary development there are certain physical features, best thought of as particular adaptations that appear to be **relevant** for speech. By themselves, such features would not lead to speech production, but they are good clues that a creature possessing such features probably has the capacity for speech.

Physiological Adaptations

Human teeth, lips, mouth, tongue, larynx, pharynx and brain have been created in such a way to coordinate in producing speech sounds. Their places, connections and coordinative functions make humankind different from all the living creatures.



Interactions and Transactions

There are two major functions of language:

Interactional Function : It is related with how human use language to interact with each other socially or emotionally, how they express their feelings or their ideas.

Transactional Function : It is related with how human use their linguistic abilities to transfer knowledge from one generation to the next.

ANIMAL AND HUMAN LANGUAGE

Communicative

To convey a message intentionally. e.g. All the things you say for communicating. Informative: Unintentional messages.e.g. If you sneeze the person you are talking to can understand that you have a cold. / If you have a strange accent the person you



are talking to can understand you are from some other part of the country.

Unique Properties of A Language

These features are uniquely a part of human language.

Displacement

Talking about things that happened in the past, happens now or will happen in the future.

There is no displacement in animal communication.

Exception: Bee communication has displacement in an extremely limited form. A bee can show the others the source of the food.

Arbitrariness

The word and object are not related to each other. e.g. dog. Cat

Exception

No arbitrary examples: Onomatopoeic sounds e.g. cuckoo, crash, squelch or whirr.

Majority of animal signals have a clear connection with the conveyed message. Animal communication is non-arbitrary.

Productivity

(Creativity / open-endedness) Language users create new words as they need them. It is an aspect of language which is linked to the fact that the potential number of utterances in any human language is infinite. Animal have fixed reference. Each signal refers to sth, but these signals can not be manipulated.

Cultural Transmission

Language passes from one generation to another. In animals there is an instinctively produce process but human infants growing up in isolation produce no instinctive language. Cultural transmission is only crucial in the human acquisition process.

Discreteness

Individual sounds can change the meaning. e.g. pack – back , bin – pin. This property is called discreteness.

Duality

To use some sounds in different places. e.g. cat – act . Sounds are the same but the meanings are different.

There is no duality in animal communication.

Other Properties

a-) Vocal- auditory channel: Producing sounds by the vocal organs and perceiving them by ears.

b-) Reciprocity: Any speaker / reader can also be a listener / receiver. c-) Specialization: Language is used linguistically.

d-) Non-directionality: Unseen but heard messages can be picked up by anyone.

e-) Rapid fade: Linguistic signals are produced and disappeared quickly.

Animal communication

If these five properties (*displacement, arbitrariness, productivity, cultural transmission, and duality*) of human language make it such a unique communication system, then it would seem extremely unlikely that other creatures would be



able to understand it. Riders can *Whoa* to horses and they stop, we can say *Heel* to dogs and they will follow our heel... Should we treat these examples as evidence that nonhumans can understand human language? Probably not. The standard explanation is that the animal produces a particular behaviour

in response to a particular sound-stimulus or 'noise', but does not actually 'understand' what the words in the noise mean.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING

Much of the evidence used in the reconstruction of ancient writing systems comes from inscriptions on stone or tablets found in the rubble of ruined cities

Logograms and ideograms

A Picture representing a particular image in a consistent way it is called Picture-writing or Pictogram. There must be a link between the pictogram and its meaning. So, we can easily understand what it refers to when we look at the pictogram.

More abstracts forms of pictograms are called Ideograms. The relationship between the entity and the symbol is not easily understood like pictograms.

- A key property of both pictograms and ideograms is that they do not represent words or sounds in a particular language.



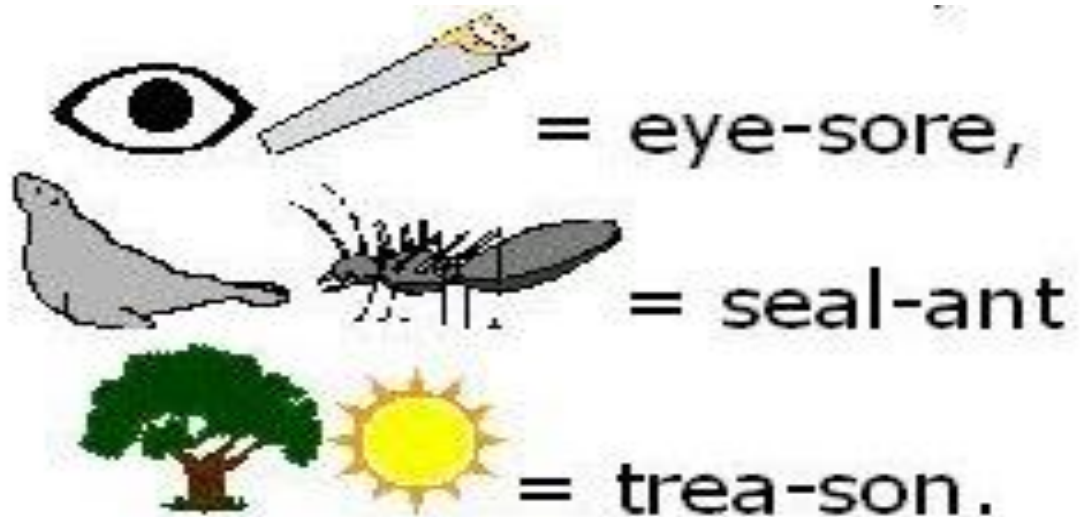
Logograms

A good example of logographic writing is the system used by the Sumerians, in the southern part of modern Iraq, around 5,000 years ago. Because of the particular shapes used in their symbols, these inscriptions are more generally described as cuneiform writing. The term cuneiform means 'wedge-shaped' and the inscriptions used by the Sumerians were produced by pressing a wedge-shaped implement into soft clay tablets,

When we consider the relationship between the written form and the object it represents, it is arbitrary.

Rebus Writing

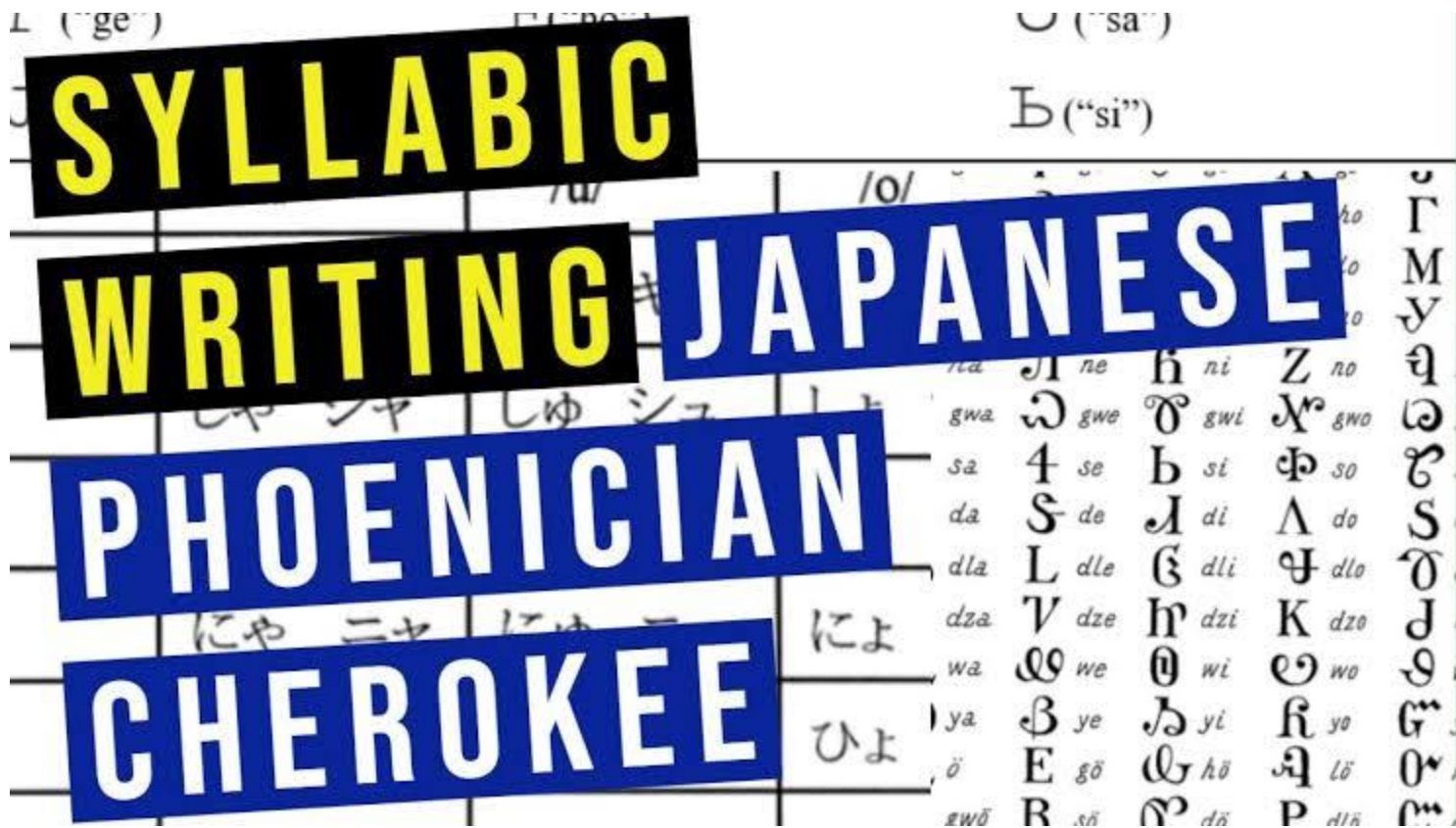
In this process, the symbol for one entity is taken over as the symbol for the sound of the spoken word used to refer to the entity. That symbol then comes to be used whenever that sound



occurs in any words. One symbol can be used in many different ways, with a range of meanings. This brings a sizeable reduction in the number of symbols needed in a writing system.

Syllabic Writing

In the last example, the symbol that is used for the pronunciation of parts of a word represents a combination (ba) of a consonant sound (b) and a vowel sound (a). This combination is one type of syllable. When a writing system employs a set of symbols each one representing the pronunciation of a syllable, it is described as syllabic writing.



There are no purely syllabic writing systems in use today, but modern Japanese can be written with a single symbols which represent spoken syllables and is consequently often described as having a syllabic writing or a syllabary.

Alphabetic Writing

An alphabet is essentially a set of written symbols which each represent a single type of sound.

Written English

The spelling of written English took place in 15 th century, via printing, so Latin and French affected the written forms.

Many of the early printers were Dutch, so they were not very successful in English pronunciation .

Since the 15 th century spoken English has undergone a lot of changes.