

## INTRODUCTION TO LINGUISTICS

### LESSON ONE:



### Introduction

When talking about the origins of language, it is interesting to discuss when exactly we as human beings started to speak for the first time. Studies have not, so far, provided us with a definitive answer. Yet, we know certainly that the spoken language existed even earlier than the written one. So, as an attempt to know more about the origins of language, many studies and experiments were carried out through history, and some of them are going to be mentioned during this lesson.

#### 1. The Divine Source :

In most religions, language is considered as a gift from God. It is believed that if human infants grow up isolated, they spontaneously begin using God-given language.

Experiments were conducted in the past in order to find out about the origin of the human language. Herodotus, a Greek writer, reported the experiment of Pharaoh, named "Psamtik", on two children who grew up in the company of a mute shepherd and goats, after a while, they uttered a Phrygian word "Bekos" which means "Bread". So the Pharaoh concluded that this language is God-given language.

We also find different evidences and proofs in other cultures and religions confirming that God is the source of language, such as believed in Islam and Christianity, where it is mentioned that God gave Adam language and this later has spread it on his offspring.

## 2. **The Natural Sound Source:**

The basic idea in this view, is that primitive words could have been imitations of the natural sounds. Several nicknames were given to different theories concerning the origins of the speech, the “Bow-Wow” and the “Pooh-Pooh” are among them.

- **The “Bow-Wow” Theory:**

According to this theory, the early humans tried to imitate the sounds and used them to refer to things associated with them. The supporters of this theory argue that the existence of words like *splash*, *bang*, *boom* and of course *bow-wow*, in the modern language, is an evidence on their claim.

- **The “Pooh-Pooh” Theory:**

When it comes to this view, the original sounds were derived from the natural cries of emotion, or exclamations, that people make in certain circumstances, such as, joy, pain, and anger. *Ouch*, *Ah*, *Oh*, or *Yuck* are some interjections that could support this view.

## 3. **The Social Interaction Theory:**

This theory places the development of human language in a social context. Early people must have lived in groups, if only because larger groups offered better protection from attack.

Groups are necessarily social organisations, and in order to maintain those organizations, some form of communication is required, even if it is just grunts and curses. Sounds, then, would have some principled use in the social interaction of early human groups.

#### 4. **The Genetic Source:**

This view suggests that human beings are born with a specific capacity for language. That is, human babies are equipped with an innate ability to learn and acquire language. This is known as the **innateness hypothesis**.

#### 5. **Conclusion**

There is nothing more powerful on earth than the human language, and we still do not understand everything about it, but we know that it makes us who we are. The ability to speak and communicate with one another.