

Questions and Model Answers

Sample 1

Q1) Define the following terms : (6 M)

1- **Reflexivity** : is a special property of human language that allows language to be used to think and talk about language itself.

1- **Productivity** : is a property of language that allows users to create new expressions . It is also called " creativity " or " open-endedness ".

2- **Culture transmission** : is the process whereby knowledge of language is passed from one generation to the next .

Q2) State whether the following statements are true or false : (4 M)

1- Linguists suspect that some type of written language must have developed well before spoken language . **False**

2- Charles Darwin thinks that early humans had already developed musical ability prior to language . **True**

3- We can easily find direct evidence relating to the speech of our distant ancestors that might tell us how language was back in the early stages . **False**

4- In most religions , there appears to be a divine source who provides humans with language . **True**

**Q3) Discuss Karl von Frisch's experiment with bees .
What did he conclude ? (5M)**

In one experiment, a hive of bees was placed at the foot of a radio tower and a food source placed at the top. Ten bees were taken to the top, given a taste of the delicious food, and sent off to tell the rest of the hive about their find. The message was conveyed via a bee dance and the whole gang buzzed off to get the free food. They flew around in all directions, but couldn't locate the food. The problem seems to be that bee communication has a fixed set of signals for communicating location and they all relate to horizontal distance. The bee cannot create a "new" message indicating vertical distance. According to Karl von Frisch, who conducted the experiment, "the bees have no word for up in their language", and they cannot invent one.

Q4) Discuss "the natural sound source" briefly . (5M)

A quite different view of the beginnings of language is based on the concept of natural sounds. 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 connection between a sound and the thing producing that sound. This leads to the idea that primitive words derive from imitations of the natural sound that early men and women heard around them. Among several linguists who focused on the origins of speech, Jesperson (1922) called this the "bow wow theory". While it is true that a number of words in any language are onomatopoeic, it is hard to see how most of the soundless things as well as abstract concepts in our world could have been referred to in a language that simply echoed natural sounds.

Sample 2

Q1) Define the following terms : (6M)

1- **Displacement** : is a property of language that allows users to talk about things and events not present in the immediate environment, such as past events and future plans.

2- **Arbitrariness** : refers to a property of language describing the fact that there is no natural connection between a linguistic form and its meaning.

3- **Duality** : is a property of language whereby linguistic forms have two simultaneous levels of sound production and meaning. It is also called "double articulation".

Q2) State whether the following statements are true or false : (4 M)

1-In most religions , there appears to be a divine source who provides humans with language . **True**

2- Very young children living without access to human language in their early years grow up with no language at all . **True**

3- Human offspring are born with a special capacity for language that is tied to a specific variety of language .

False

4- Animals can add or create new expressions in their communicative system. **False**

Q3) Discuss the story of the Egyptian pharaoh

(Psammetichus) that was reported by Herodotus . (5 M

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 !!

Q4) Explain "the social interaction source" briefly.
(5 M)

Another proposal involving natural sounds has been called 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 mammals.

This proposal places the development of human language in a social context, but it does not answer the question regarding the origins of the sounds produced. Apes and other primates live in social groups and use grunts and social calls, but they do not seem to have developed the capacity for speech.