

Chapter Three: Origins of Language

1. DIVINE SOURCE

Judeo-Christian beliefs → God gave Adam the power to name all things

Hindu tradition → Sarasvati, wife of Brahma

Egyptians → the god Thoth

Babylonians → the god Nabu

Experiments → if human infants grow up without hearing any language around them, then they would spontaneously begin using the original God-given language

Psammetichus in Egypt (2500)

King James the Fourth in Scotland (1500)

Akbar the Great in Mongolia (400)

2. NATURAL SOUND SOURCE

2.1. Ding-dong Theory

People made noises when they encountered certain phenomena, e.g., *boom* for explosion

2.2. Bow-wow Theory

People imitated the sounds of the environment especially animal sounds, e.g., *bow-wow* for dog

➤ **Note:** support → *onomatopoeic words*

2.3. Pooh-pooh Theory

Instinctive sounds, caused by natural cries of emotion such as pain and fear

➤ **Note:** interjections are usually produced with sudden intakes of breath

2.4. La-la Theory

Speech emerged from the sounds of love, poetic sensibility, and song as an expressive need

2.5. Yo-he-ho Theory

Sounds of a person involved in physical effort

➤ **Note:** social context → **social interaction source**

3. ORAL GESTURE SOURCE

A set of physical gestures was developed as a means of communication → a set of oral gestures developed according to patterns of movement similar to physical gestures

4. GLOSSOGENETICS

Continuity view → language ability as a difference in degree between humans and other primates
→ Darwinian perspective

Discontinuity view → onset of language ability is a qualitative leap, e.g., Chomsky's language organ

4.1. Physical Adaptation Source

Ancestors made a major transition to an upright posture; teeth are upright; lips have much more intricate muscle; human mouth is relatively small; etc.

4.2. Tool-making Source

Manual gestures may have been a precursor of language: functions that control the motor movements involved in speaking and making tools are very close to each other

4.3. Genetic Source

Humans are born with a special capacity for language → **innateness hypothesis** (something in human genetics)

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