

**COVENANT UNIVERSITY  
NIGERIA**

*TUTORIAL KIT  
OMEGA SEMESTER*

**PROGRAMME: SOCIOLOGY**

**COURSE: SOC 223**

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## **SOC223: LANGUAGE IN SOCIETY AND CULTURE**

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1. The origin of language has given rise to many debates over the years. Give a detailed account of different schools of thought you know.
2. Explain the complexities of the relationship between Language and the social context in which it is generated.
3. Describe in details the stages of language development.
4. Explain the social learning theory and its importance to language development.
5. Outline the major processes of communication and explain each of the steps citing relevant examples.
6. List and discuss the properties of language you know?
7. Examine the relationship between culture and language citing relevant explanation to back up your answers.
8. Discuss the hypotheses explaining the origin of human language.
9. Give a detailed account of the diversity of human language.
10. Identify and differentiate between types of language and discuss the social function of language.
11. Language acquisition does not equate communication. Discuss?
12. Explain the complexity of the relationship between Language and culture.
13. More than one process is involved in the creation or word-formation. Carefully identify and discuss the processes.
14. What are the differences between a behaviourist and a nativist view of first language acquisition?
15. Describe in an orderly procedure the process of language acquisition in a child from birth to age four.

16. Although both sign language and gesture involve the use of hands with other arts of the body, they are rather different. Discuss.
17. Write comprehensive note on the following
- i. Types of gesture.
  - ii. Types of sign languages.
18. Examine the diversity of human language supporting the accounts with biblical events.
19. Describe the different functions of Human language.
20. Examine the processes involved in acquiring second language in detail.

## **ANSWER**

**1.** The origins of language have given rise to many debates over the years. Give a detailed account of different schools of thought you know. **20 Marks**

**1) Belief in divine creation.** Many societies throughout history believed that language is the gift of the gods to humans. The most familiar is found in Genesis 2:20, which tells us that Adam gave names to all living creatures. This belief predicates that humans were created from the start

with an innate capacity to use language. It can't be proven that language is as old as humans, but it is definitely true that language and human society are inseparable. **6marks**

**2) Natural evolution hypothesis.** At some point in their evolutionary development humans acquired a more sophisticated brain which made language invention and learning possible. In other words, at some point in time humans evolved a language acquisition device, whatever this may be in real physical terms. The simple vocalizations and gestures inherited from our primate ancestors then quickly gave way to a creative system of language perhaps within a single generation or two. According to the natural evolution hypothesis, as soon as humans developed the biological, or neurological, capacity for creative language, the cultural development of some specific system of forms with meanings would have been an inevitable next step. **6 marks**

### **3) The four imitation hypotheses**

The "**ding-dong**" hypothesis. Language began when humans started naming objects, actions and phenomena after a recognizable sound associated with it in real life. . The problem with this hypothesis is that **onomatopoeia** (imitation of natural sound heard around them) is a very limited part of the vocabulary of any language, imitative sounds differ from language to language.

The "**pooh-pooh**" hypothesis holds that the first words came from involuntary exclamations of dislike, hunger, pain, or pleasure, eventually leading to the expression of more developed ideas and emotions.

The "**bow-wow**" hypothesis (the most famous and therefore the most ridiculed hypothesis) holds that vocabulary developed from imitations of animal noises, such as: *Moo, bark, hiss, meow, quack-quack*. In other words, the first human words were a type of index, a sign whose form is naturally connected with its meaning in time and space.

The "**ta-ta**" hypothesis. Charles Darwin hypothesized (though he himself was sceptical about his own hypothesis) that speech may have developed as a sort of mouth pantomime: the organs of speech were used to imitate the gestures of the hand. In other words, language developed from gestures that began to be imitated by the organs of speech--the first words were lip icons of hand gestures

2. Describe the different properties of language. 10 Marks

(1) **Displacement** (2) **Arbitrariness** (3) **Productivity** (4) **Cultural transmission.**

(5) **Discreteness** (6) **Duality**

2. Describe in details the stages of language development. 20 marks

### **1 - Exposure**

This is called cultural transmission, not genetic transmission. If the child were not exposed to a human language, “the language faculty” (that is the ability to acquire language) with which he is born, can not be activated.

**2 - Physical Fitness:** There is no language output if language faculty was not activated. This leads us to say that language acquisition requires both the auditory and the acoustic input.

**3-The Critical Age:** The critical age, called Puberty, occurs in the area where language is. Language acquisition has to be activated before this age. If the language faculty is not activated on time that is before this age language acquisition will certainly fail. **(5 marks)**

## **II - Stages of Language Acquisition:**

### **Pre- Linguistic Period:**

a – Cooing: During their first months, children cry many times in a day; these cries are accompanied by producing some sounds.

b - Babbling: Babies all over the world produce the same sounds and they may produce sounds that are never used in their environment. Babbling is an internal behaviour not a response to external stimulation. Children around the sixth to the ninth month begin to differentiate between the sounds and select the sounds that exist in their environment.

c - The Linguistic Period

d - The Two-Word Utterances

e - Telegraphic Stage:

6. Outline the major processes of communication and explain each of the steps citing relevant examples.

The critical part of communication is the information, which is being transferred. For the transfer of the information or the message, certain vehicle or medium is employed, The way the vehicles take and transport the information in such a way that the receiver understands it as it should be is the communication process. **4 marks for introduction**

All the elements involved in communication which constitute the communication process are a) sender b) receiver c) message c) encoding d) decoding e) channel f) noise g) feedback.

7. Identify and differentiate between types of language and discuss the social function of language.

Human language is very different from the so-called animal languages. It can be defined as a systematized combination of speech sounds which have meanings for all the members of a given community.

**Spoken language:** The most basic symbol systems in any society are its spoken languages

**Body language:** Supplementing its spoken language, every society uses conventional gestures and facial expressions whose messages are evident to members of the group.

**Written language:** written language has expanded our ability to communicate information.

### **8. Social function of language**

1. A language is the communicative means for a society, serving equally every member of the society. Language itself has no class character. People of different classes may express their ideas by use of different words, phrases or expressions chosen from the same language.
2. Conceptual thinking cannot be achieved without language.
3. Language is a part of culture and plays a very important role in it, carrying, reflecting and transmitting the content of culture. So language can be considered as the vehicle and transmitter.