



This test measures your ability to comprehend written materials.

EXAM CODE: PV-290526

TIME: 70 minutes

DIRECTIONS:

Read the passage carefully and, for each question, choose the one best answer (A), (B), (C) or (D) based on what is stated in the passage or on what can be inferred from the passage. Then mark the letter on your answer sheet that matches the letter of the answer that you have selected. (5 points each correct answer)

Evolutionary Theories on the Origin of Speech

By Brad Harrub, Bert Thompson and Dave Miller.

1. Many animals are capable of using sounds to communicate. However, there is a colossal difference between the hoot of an owl or the grunt of a pig, and a human standing before an audience reciting Robert Frost's *The Road Not Taken*. This enormous chasm between humans and animals has led to a multiplicity of theories on exactly how man came upon this unequalled capability. Many researchers have focused on the capabilities of animals—sounds and gestures—in an effort to understand the physiological mechanism underlying communication. But there is a single common theme that stands out amid all the theories: 'The world's languages evolved spontaneously. They were not designed'.
2. Design implies a designer; thus, evolutionists have **conjured up** theories that consider language nothing more than a fortuitous chain of events. Most of these theories involve humans growing bigger brains, which then made it physiologically possible for people to develop speech and language. For instance, in the foreword of her book, *The Seeds of Speech*, Jean Aitchison hypothesized:
3. 'Physically, a deprived physical environment led to more meat-eating and, as a result, a bigger brain. The enlarged brain led to the premature birth of humans, and in consequence a protracted childhood, during which mothers cooed and crooned to their offspring. An upright stance altered the shape of the mouth and vocal tract, allowing a range of coherent sounds to be uttered.'
4. Thus, according to Aitchison, we can thank 'a deprived physical environment' for our ability to talk and communicate. Another evolutionist, John McCrone, put it this way: 'It all started with an ape that learned to speak. Man's hominid ancestors were doing well enough, even though the world had slipped into the cold grip of the ice ages. They had solved a few key problems that had held back the other branches of the ape family, such as how to find enough food to feed their rather oversized brains. Then man's ancestors happened on the trick of language. Suddenly, a whole new mental landscape opened up. Man became self-aware and self-possessed.'
5. How (and why) did that first ape learn to speak? It is easy to assert that 'it all started with an ape that learned to speak'. But it is much more difficult to describe how this took place, especially in light of our failure to teach apes to speak today. In his book, *From Hand to Mouth: The Origins of Language*, Michael Corballis stated: 'My own view is that language developed much more gradually, starting with the gestures of apes, then gathering momentum as the bipedal hominins evolved. The appearance of the larger-brained genus *Homo* some two million years ago may have signaled the emergence and later development of syntax, with vocalizations providing a mounting refrain. What may have distinguished *Homo sapiens* was the final switch from a mixture of gestural and vocal communication to an autonomous vocal language, embellished by gesture but not dependent on it.'
6. The truth, however, is that evolutionists can only speculate as to the origin of language. Evolutionist Carl Zimmer summed it up well when he wrote: 'No one knows the exact chronology of this evolution (A), because language leaves precious few traces on the human skeleton (B). The voice box is a flimsy piece of cartilage that rots away (C). It is suspended from a slender C-shaped bone called a hyoid, but the **ravages** of time usually destroy the hyoid too (D).'
7. Thus, theories are plentiful—while the evidence to support those theories remains mysteriously unavailable. Add to this the fact that humans acquire the ability to communicate (and even learn some of the basic rules of syntax) by the age of two, and you begin to see why Aitchison admitted: 'Of course, holes still remain in our knowledge:

in particular, at what stage did language leap from being something new which humans discovered to being something which every newborn human is scheduled to acquire? This is still a puzzle.' A 'puzzle' indeed!

Adapted from HARRUB, Brad; THOMPSON, Bert; MILLER, Dave. The origin of language and communication. *TJ (Technical Journal)*, v. 17, n. 3, p. 93–101, 2003.

1. According to paragraph 1, which of the following best describes the contrast between human and animal communication?
 - (A) Human speech demonstrates a level of complexity and abstraction that animal sounds do not reach.
 - (B) Animal sounds serve emotional purposes, while human speech serves only intellectual functions.
 - (C) Animal communication relies entirely on instinct, whereas human speech is culturally inherited.
 - (D) Humans and animals differ mainly in their ability to produce a wider range of sounds.
2. In paragraph 1, the author's mention of "The Road Not Taken" serves primarily to
 - (A) question the artistic value of human speech in comparison to animal sounds.
 - (B) highlight the literary origins of complex human communication systems.
 - (C) suggest that poetry is the highest form of communication available.
 - (D) illustrate the refined and symbolic nature of human language.
3. According to paragraph 1, what common idea unites most theories about language origin?
 - (A) Language emerged through deliberate human planning and design.
 - (B) Language appeared naturally without intentional creation over time.
 - (C) Animal communication systems directly evolved into human languages.
 - (D) Language development depended primarily on environmental pressures.
4. In paragraph 2, the word "*conjured up*" is closest in meaning to
 - (A) demonstrated
 - (B) measured
 - (C) imagined
 - (D) verified
5. According to paragraph 2, why do evolutionists reject the idea of design in language?
 - (A) Because design would imply the existence of a conscious creator.
 - (B) Because animal communication already shows evidence of design.
 - (C) Because humans consciously invented language systems over time.
 - (D) Because language development is unquestionably documented in fossils.
6. According to paragraph 3, what idea does Aitchison propose?
 - (A) Larger brains led directly to advanced grammar and abstract thinking.
 - (B) Upright posture caused immediate development of complex language systems.
 - (C) Environmental hardship resulted in biological and social changes enabling speech.
 - (D) Childhood dependency prevented the development of early communication formats.
7. Why does the author include Aitchison's quotation in paragraph 3?
 - (A) To criticize her perspective as inconsistent with other evolutionary explanations.
 - (B) To provide a detailed example of an evolutionary explanation of language.
 - (C) To demonstrate that environmental factors have no role in language origin.
 - (D) To show that most theories rely on experimental scientific evidence.
8. According to paragraph 4, what is the main claim attributed to John McCrone?
 - (A) Early humans already possessed language before environmental changes.
 - (B) Language evolved gradually through gestures and vocal combinations.
 - (C) Language suddenly transformed human cognition and awareness.
 - (D) Communication systems remained unaltered during the ice ages.
9. In paragraph 4, the phrase "*a whole new mental landscape*" suggests that
 - (A) language allowed entirely new forms of thinking and perception.
 - (B) communication replaced instinctive behavior in early humans.
 - (C) humans became physically adapted to survive harsh climates.
 - (D) mental abilities declined as language became dominant.
10. In paragraph 5, the phrase "*this took place*" most nearly refers to
 - (A) the cognitive expansion associated with larger brain development.
 - (B) the environmental adaptations that supported early human survival.
 - (C) the shift from non-linguistic to linguistic communication in early humans.

- (D) the unsuccessful attempts to replicate speech acquisition in modern apes in experiments.
11. According to paragraph 5, why is McCrone's claim considered problematic?
- (A) Because it relies entirely on fossil records for support.
 - (B) Because there is strong evidence contradicting his argument.
 - (C) Because apes have demonstrated similar linguistic abilities today.
 - (D) Because it does not explain the mechanism behind language emergence.
12. According to paragraph 5, which statement best reflects Corballis's view?
- (A) Language appeared suddenly with no intermediate stages.
 - (B) Vocal language existed independently from the earliest stages.
 - (C) Humans never relied on gestures for communication development.
 - (D) Gestures played an early role before vocal language became dominant.
13. Why does the author include Corballis's explanation in paragraph 5?
- (A) To show a contrasting theory emphasizing gradual development.
 - (B) To confirm that all researchers agree on language origins.
 - (C) To demonstrate that vocal language predates gestures.
 - (D) To reject gesture-based explanations entirely.
14. According to paragraph 6, why is it difficult to trace the origin of language?
- (A) Because early humans did not produce written records.
 - (B) Because animals do not leave any physical remains.
 - (C) Because speech-related structures rarely fossilize.
 - (D) Because language evolved too recently to study.
15. In paragraph 6, the word "ravages" is closest in meaning to
- (A) marks.
 - (B) effects.
 - (C) remains.
 - (D) destruction.
16. Where would the following sentence best fit in paragraph 6?
- "This absence of physical evidence severely limits scientific certainty."*
17. Which of the following best summarizes paragraph 7?
- (A) Human communication evolved entirely through environmental necessity.
 - (B) Despite many theories, there is little concrete evidence supporting them.
 - (C) Fossil evidence provides detailed insight into language development.
 - (D) Scientists have reached agreement on the origin of human language.
18. In paragraph 7, why does the author mention children acquiring language by age two?
- (A) To suggest that children imitate animal communication patterns.
 - (B) To show that language development depends entirely on teaching.
 - (C) To highlight the rapid and natural acquisition of language abilities.
 - (D) To explain that language learning is slower than previously thought.
19. Which of the following best captures the central claim of the statement: "theories are plentiful—while the evidence... remains unavailable"?
- (A) A wide range of explanations has been proposed, yet empirical substantiation for them is largely lacking.
 - (B) The abundance of data has allowed researchers to confirm competing accounts of language origin.
 - (C) Existing explanations have been consolidated due to the strength of supporting material evidence.
 - (D) Numerous hypotheses have been validated through consistent and replicable scientific findings.
20. Which of the following best describes the organization of the entire text?
- (A) It presents several theories and ultimately questions their evidential basis.
 - (B) It compares human language primarily with modern animal behavior.
 - (C) It argues consistently in favor of a single evolutionary explanation.
 - (D) It focuses on experimental methods used to study communication.

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ANSWER KEY WITH EXPLANATIONS

Q	Ans	Parag	Type	Explanation
1	A	1	Factual	Text contrasts simple animal sounds vs complex human speech.
2	D	1	Rhetorical	Example illustrates sophistication of human language.
3	B	1	Factual	States languages “evolved spontaneously”.
4	C	2	Vocabulary	“Conjured up” = imagined or devised.
5	A	2	Inference	Design implies designer → rejected.
6	C	3	Factual	Sequence: environment → biology → speech.
7	B	3	Purpose	Quotation exemplifies evolutionary reasoning.
8	C	4	Factual	Language opened new mental awareness.
9	A	4	Inference	“Mental landscape” = new cognition.
10	C	5	Reference	“This” refers to the ape learning to speak, i.e., the shift to linguistic communication.
11	D	5	Inference	Fails to explain mechanism.
12	D	5	Factual	Gestures precede vocal language.
13	A	5	Purpose	Shows gradual alternative theory.
14	C	6	Factual	Soft tissues do not fossilize.
15	D	6	Vocabulary	“Ravages” = destruction.
16	B	6	Paraphrase	The sentence contrasts many theories with little evidence; only B preserves this meaning.
17	B	7	Paraphrase	Main idea: many theories, little evidence.
18	C	7	Rhetorical	Shows natural acquisition speed.
19	A	7	Insert text	Best follows mention of lack of traces.
20	A	WT	Organization	Text presents theories then questions them.