

※ 注意：請於試卷內之「非選擇題作答區」作答，並應註明作答之題號。

1. Read the following passage and answer the question below. (25%)

SOCIAL MOTIVES FOR SYNTAX

As surprising as it may sound, most cognitive-science research on language has been avowedly disinterested in communication. One dominant philosophy, grounded in the work of linguist Noam Chomsky, sees language as primarily an instrument of thought, not action. On this view, the key event in the evolution of language was a mutation resulting in an organlike faculty in the human mind, with selective advantage in the realm of reasoning. This faculty happened also to be useful for generating complex communicative behavior, though perhaps in the same way that a foot happens to be good for playing soccer: it did not evolve under the selective pressure of that function.

Michael Tomasello (a developmental psychologist at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology) offers a distinctly contrasting perspective in *Origins of Human Communication*. Following ordinary-language philosophers from Ludwig Wittgenstein through J. L. Austin, Paul Grice, and John Searle, Tomasello sees language as a means for doing things, not a device for processing or merely externalizing thoughts. Here, to communicate is to act on others in the social realm. For language to have this function presumes not only a conspecific with a comprehending mind but also a willingness to cooperate. Take the simple example of a request: I say, "Please pass the salt." If all goes well, this utterance has an effect on your mind that in turn causes a compliant pattern of behavior: you pass me the salt.

Requests form one of three classes of social action on which Tomasello builds his account of human communication. The others are informing-helping (e.g., when one person points to keys that another just dropped) and sharing (e.g., when two people's attitudes toward a third person align in the course of a gossip session). He summarizes research showing that all three social motives are fully evident in the communicative behavior of prelinguistic infants and all but absent among our closest relatives, the great apes. Humans have a special combination of cooperative instincts, prosocial motives, high-level intention attribution, and moral propensities. Tomasello contends that without this unique psychological wherewithal in the domain of social cognition, language as we know it could never have evolved.

Tomasello's work represents a long-standing and now rapidly growing view that language is not restricted to abstract structures of grammatical patterning but includes gestures and other bodily movements of the kinds that typically accompany speech. In this book, Tomasello does more than merely include gestures: he gives them pride of place. Gestures, he argues, are necessary for the development of language in both phylogeny and ontogeny. What is new here is not the idea itself but the fascinating battery of experiments by Tomasello and colleagues garnered in support of it. The research settles some long-standing controversies in developmental psychology by showing that 9-month-olds use gestures for multiple, often sophisticated social functions, including the three basic social motives. These favorable conclusions on the social cognitive sophistication of human infants contrast with the findings on primates Tomasello summarizes. The research he discusses defines limits of chimpanzees' capacities in experimental settings (to the certain chagrin of many field-working primatologists). Lacking humanlike prosocial motives, chimps show only rudimentary strategies for making requests and little or no evidence of the helping and sharing behavior that comes so naturally to human infants.

Many traditional linguists find a focus on gesture in accounting for the origin of language unsatisfying. The problem is that while gesture provides a key link in the chain of events, other critical links remain missing. Gestures lack the highly structured complexity of grammar: How to get from one to the other? [Such statements of incredulity are of course the enemy of gradualist evolutionary accounts.] Linguists in the 1990s expressed a similar worry in response to Robin Dunbar's socially grounded theory of language evolution. When Dunbar proposed that language evolved in response to the pressure of maintaining social relations in ever-larger groups—functionally analogous to (but much more efficacious than) what primates do with grooming—linguists complained that they could not see how to get from "mere grooming" to the dazzling complexities of syntax. As a linguist, Tomasello is qualified to address this concern and advance Dunbar's cause significantly (although surprisingly he makes no reference to Dunbar's work).

Tomasello's solution is an ingenious linking of requesting, informing, and sharing with three distinct levels of complexity in the grammatical possibilities that any language will furnish. He dubs these "simple syntax" (strongly dependent on immediate context), "serious syntax" (for making unambiguous reference across contexts), and "fancy syntax" (for organizing long and complex narratives). But this is essentially as far as his links to grammar go, promissory notes notwithstanding. Precisely because the author is a linguist, this omission is a missed opportunity to complete the argument, to connect the dots that lead from basic social actions ultimately to the radically varying, historically developed complex linguistic systems that are found around the world. I fear that without the story being told through to the end, many linguists will remain incredulous.

With this book, Tomasello makes a powerful and highly readable case for the social foundations of human communication (in line with a fundamental shift in current thinking on the nature of language) and of the underlying cognition that makes language possible. In this naturalistic account, language is an adaptation that gradually emerged, in step with the evolution of a special kind of social mind.

Questions:

- (1) What are the two views of language indicated in the article? (10%)
(2) Does the author agree with Tomasello's view? Please use at most 200 words to support your claim. (15%)

2. Write a summary of 150 words for the following article. (25%)**HOW MANY LANGUAGES? LINGUISTS DISCOVER NEW TONGUES IN CHINA**

After a long day in the field, deep in the mountains of southwestern China near the border with Vietnam, retired environmental health professor Gary Shook was surprised to meet another American, Jamn Pelkey, staying in the same government guesthouse. The two exchanged pleasantries.

"I'm collecting tiger beetles," explained Shook, who had found four new species in the region. "What about you?"

"I'm collecting new species of languages," replied Pelkey, then a graduate student at La Trobe University in Australia doing fieldwork for his dissertation. In 2006, Pelkey and his wife were gathering linguistic data in 41 villages in a 100,000-square-kilometer area of Yunnan Province. Over the course of a year, they drove 15,000 kilometers across rugged terrain in a Jeep. At the end, Pelkey had identified 24 languages associated with the Phula ethnic group, 18 of which had never been defined scientifically before. Until Pelkey's work, these languages had been invisible because their speakers were lumped together under a single ethnic label, the Yi, which is officially considered to have one language.

At a time when hundreds of languages are disappearing because children don't learn them and adults don't speak them, it may seem surprising that many existing languages have never even been named (though they are not "new," especially not to the people who speak them). Yet there are potentially hundreds of undiscovered languages in China, Burma, the Amazon, and elsewhere, linguists say. Pelkey's 24 are listed for the first time this month, in the latest edition of *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, an authoritative, worldwide gazetteer of languages maintained and published by SIL International, a non-profit based in Dallas, Texas. This newest edition of *Ethnologue* lists 6909 living languages from 156 countries, including 83 "new" languages from 19 countries.

Pelkey's new entries are the most from any single country. China is "one of the last places on earth where there are large numbers of unreported and undescribed languages," says linguist David Bradley of La Trobe, who also works in Yunnan. The reasons have to do with geography, history, and politics. Bradley speculates that Yunnan alone may have over 150 languages, and Western and Chinese linguists are now surveying the region more thoroughly. "In the last few years, there's been very much a heightened interest [by Chinese] in their diversity and a desire to study and work on language maintenance," says linguist Arienne Dwyer of the University of Kansas, Lawrence. Yet this interest in linguistic diversity sometimes conflicts with the notion of a multiethnic but unified Chinese state. "The reason that language is particularly sensitive is that, in southwestern China, language was the principal way of categorizing people," says Thomas Mullaney, a historian at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California.

How can there be so many undiscovered languages in one region? One reason is the remoteness of villages. "Yunnan has so many mountains, and transportation was so limited before the Communists started building roads, and ethnic groups have been proliferating for so many centuries there," Pelkey says. "The astonishing thing would be to walk into the situation and find only a few dozen languages."

Yunnan is most frequently identified by the colorfully embroidered clothes and quilted hats of the non-Han ethnic groups who have called the mountains and lowlands home for thousands of years. Because their languages were rarely written down, linguistic change went unchecked. Local and imperial governments had little interest in languages, leaving them uncared for.

Centuries of isolation widened the gap between varieties descended from the same parent tongue. Today, the 500 speakers of ALO Phola can't understand speakers of a sister language spoken less than 8 kilometers away, says Pelkey. One of Pelkey's main criteria for judging language separateness is "mutual intelligibility," or how well speakers of different varieties are able to understand each other. Among speakers of the 24 Phula languages, mutual intelligibility is so low that if they ever got together, they would have to communicate in a regional variety of Mandarin, Pelkey says. Many Chinese languages are being described only now in part because a tradition of lumping ethnic groups together has masked the extent of the diversity. Chinese social scientists of the 1930s and '40s streamlined the number of ethnic minority groups, which were based mainly on language. "The logic was, 'It does no one any good to have an ethnic group of 100 people,'" says Mullaney. In the 1950s, about 50 surveyors spent 6 months in Yunnan and divided a population of 2 million into 20 official groups, even though 212 ethnic group names had been discovered. In 1991, China permanently froze the number of recognized ethnic nationalities, known as *minzu*, at 56: the majority Han plus 55 minority groups, 25 in Yunnan. Until the 1980s, it was forbidden to suggest that China had more than 55 languages,

Bradley wrote in 2005 in the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*. "Any additional linguistic entities had to be classified as 'fangyan.'" Although the word fangyan is often translated as "dialect," it refers more specifically to "a language spoken in a specific area," or a "topolect," in contrast to *yuyan*, or an autonomous language.

This legacy has led to some disagreement between Chinese and Western linguists over what counts as a language. "We are very strict, while foreign researchers are very loose," says linguist Sun Hongkai of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing. Sun began doing fieldwork in 1953 in Sichuan Province and Yunnan and has helped identify 19 languages. He promotes a method different from that of Western linguists, saying that the boundary between a language and a dialect should be determined by comparing grammatical patterns, vocabulary, and sound rules. If they are similar, the varieties are dialects of the same language. Other Chinese scholars add that varieties that come from the same parent language and have the same writing system must be *fangyan*, not *yuyan*, and reject mutual intelligibility as unscientific. Using such criteria, the roughly 230 European languages would be *fangyan* of a handful of languages. Chinese linguists "are still constrained by political realities as well as the traditional macro-categories imposed by the Han Chinese majority on their minorities," says Bradley.

For example, in a 2008 report to UNESCO of endangered languages in China, Sun listed a single language for the Yi *minzu*. Although some of the Phula languages Pelkey described are endangered, they cannot be identified as such because the Yi officially have only one language. So it may be harder to target those languages with revitalization resources.

3. Our folk theory of language considers the meanings as contained directly in the words and their combinations, since that is all that we are ever consciously aware of. According to such assumption, meaning is attributed essentially to language.

(1) Argue against the above assumption by providing briefly two or more reasons. (10%)

(2) Based on one of the reasons given in (1), elaborate your idea into a concisely written paragraph. (15%)

4. Wittgenstein once said, "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world." Does the so-called "international internet culture" described below change your understanding of Wittgenstein's statement? Explain your view in less than 150 words. Make sure that the view you express is supported with evidence and well argued for. (25%)

We're now watching the establishment of an international internet culture that is different from the culture of any one nation. That culture is being transmitted -- misleadingly and dangerously -- in Netglisch, and huge numbers of the people actively involved in this process are people whose native language is not English of any variety. In Netglisch, all the concepts of time and space and scheduling are suddenly changed; the idea of what the words success and profit mean are changed; the sought-after goal is not money but attention; products and services are literally given away for free; privacy has to be redefined drastically; everything is turned on its head. Whether this revolution will be allowed to take place or will be stopped in its tracks (assuming that it can still be stopped, which may be an absurd assumption), nobody knows.

[Adapted from *The Language Imperative*, Chapter 4, pp. 126-128]

試題隨卷繳回