

## Week 4

### Hauser et al

- Would it be easier for children to first learn the meaning and later the symbol of e.g. numbers?
- Is it possible to learn chimpanzee (or other animals) to communicate with people?
- Various researches show that chimpanzees are capable of understanding and learning sign languages. Remains though the FLN uniquely human matter as the paper suggests?
- I definitely agree with the author suggesting that all the animate species have developed their own unique way how to communicate. However, how is it possible that a dog is capable of understanding orders given by a human? I would easily accept the fact if a chimpanzee understood and fulfilled these orders because humans and chimpanzees seem to be somehow related in a sense, but to be honest, a relation to a dog is a very strange idea.
- If we take into consideration the statement that “the faculty of language as a whole relies on some uniquely human capacities that have evolved recently in the approximately 6 million years since our divergence from a chimpanzee-like common ancestor”, does it mean that non-human animals such as chimpanzee, or gorillas do not possess these capacities, and therefore for example the sign language which some of them “produce” is just the result of learning things by heart and in reality they do not understand it?
- Are vocal imitation and sense of self representation really essential for language acquisition?
- If you wanted to prove that only humans are able to generate new combinations of words/(symbols), what method would you apply? What data will you use?
- The production of species-typical vocalizations is largely innate, however many species also learn through imitation. If we took an animal out of its natural environment and placed it in isolation (no chance for imitation, innate dispositions only), would the animal be able to produce the same sounds as the animals in their natural environment?
- Do you think that what some animals produce is a language or it is just its imitation (e.g. words that birds, especially parrots produce)?
- Has anyone claimed that there are two languages (excluding their dialects) that would use the same set of phonemes and exactly the same signs in their phonemic transcription? In other words, are there two different languages with identical number and characteristics of their sounds?
- Is it possible to think about the evolution of humans’ "language of gestures" in the same way as we are thinking about the evolution of verbal language? Could we, ever, assume that before we created the capacity and ability for vocal language, there had existed the language of gestures only? If yes, was our ability to produce gestures somehow modified by the appearance of the verbal language? Did this language of gestures undergo some functional changes and isn't it, actually redundant?