

## Week 5

### Pinker & Jackendoff

- When we say that there is the difference between human and nonhuman communication, can we say that, when animals “communicate” or use their “language”, it is somehow different also in a qualitative manner despite the fact that animals get the message of their language among themselves?
- In the text, we could read that all words have to be learned. People are able to learn words and their meanings. As we know, some kinds of parrots are able to learn words and phrases. What do you think? Do they know the meaning of these words or phrases?
- "Words have several properties that appear to be uniquely human“ ...but we know that also animals have their own language, so why not assume that this language may consist of also set of words?
- *"... language is not properly regarded as a system of communication . It is a system for expressing thought, something quite different. It can of course be used for communication, as can anything people do – manner of walking or style of clothes or hair, for example. But in any useful sense of the term, communication is not the function of language, and may even be of no unique significance for understanding the functions and nature of language (Chomsky, 2000b, p. 75)."* I think that we use language in order to communicate with the world. We write texts to express ideas, we speak when we want to express an agreement or disagreement, we create single-word signs to name buildings, streets, but that is all communication. If Chomsky says that *"communication is not the function of language"*, then what is the real function of language?
- Although, it is certain that biology plays a role in the evolution of language, isn't its role little bit overestimated? Isn't it more probable that social and cultural factors are more important in explaining language structure, language change and language acquisition? Could we assume, regardless of all different theories about language evolution, that it is mainly socio-cultural background what influences language evolution and adaptation and that features of a language are the products of adaptation to learning constraints and the communicative requirements of the speaker population?
- According to the statement outspoken by HCF that 'language did not evolve for the communication purposes', why the phenomenon of so-called 'vocal babbling' of human infants (instinctive tendency to speak & communicate) exists then?
- Do you think that the future technologies will be able to affirm the recursion to be either 100% a consequence of natural selection or 100% a product of genetic drift?
- According to Darwin, the babbling of human infants is a sign of human instinctive tendency to speak. But since the sounds of human infants do not differ dramatically from the sounds produced by certain primate infants, does it mean that they possess the same instinctive tendency to speak?

- Some animals are able to produce words but are they also able to ascribe them to the concepts they represent? If not, where would we class the ability to learn words – to FLN or FLB? Because both, people and animals, can learn words but in a different way.
- Is the difference in syllable / vowel / consonant perception between humans and animals (chinchillas, budgerigars, quails) caused by the fact that they have differently organized vocal tract and some sounds we produce is not natural for them or it is just a problem of their understanding and the vocal tract has nothing to do with it? (And as regards the differentiation among people, although we have the vocal tract organized in the same way, why some people even after years of trying are not able to produce / recognize some sounds) e.g.: Italians are not able to produce our “ch”, we Slovaks often do not see the difference between the French open / closed “e”?)
- If humans "are not able to convincingly reproduce any environmental sounds" and "the vocal imitaion in humans should be described as a capacity to learn to produce speech" only, shouldn't we assume that these kinds of imitation - other than imitation of speech - are not necessary to research within faculty of language? And why are some animals able to imitate environmental sounds so good (if not for communication purposes)?
- Although, monkeys are able to produce language (words) they do not discriminate a lot of of things, e.g. the initial consonant from the vowel or syllable lenght. How then can they produce a word?