

CLASSES 21–22: EVOLUTIONARY ISSUES

EVOLUTION OF LANGUAGE

- from Paris ban on speculation about evolution to sudden explosion in past few years
- common theme: adaptation for communication
 - difference: What was the selective pressure?
(remember that selection is post-hoc, so this really doesn't matter)
 - focus on comparisons of humans vs. animals

HCF

- the first *really* new theory (Hauser, Chomsky & Fitch, 'The faculty of language', 2002)
- Chomsky's view: language is *not for communication*; PF came *late*
- emphasis on computation
- FLN vs. FLB: debate over what's what (recap Y-model)
 - what's part of FLB (technically, FLB does *not* include memory, lung capacity, etc.)
- FLN candidates
 - basically, narrow syntax NS — animal communication is SEM \leftrightarrow PHON
 - interfaces (if NS is special, then interfaces must be)
 - recursion
 - debate over how to define recursion (suggests this is not really the right path)
 - no disorder knocks out just recursion (Pinker & Jackendoff's response papers)
 - Everett (the issue of Pirāha and lots of discussion articles in recent years)
 - lexicalization
 - Are words just sound–meaning pairs? (if so, animals clearly have them)
 - if no, maybe lexicalization ("glue") is special
 - in that case, maybe it's not *recursion* that's special, but *recursability*
 - strategy now: come up with a big list of all the little components of language, then see if animals have them (in which case, FLB)
 - of course, it's still a legitimate question whether these are true homologs
 - but even still, interesting because it might tell us about constraints on solution (e.g., octopus eye and ours developed independently but are very similar)

ADAPTATION VS SALTATION VS SPANDREL

- HCF vs. P&J (basically the only linguists who still believe in adaptation story)
- time frame too narrow for adaptation, selection of a lot of stuff
 - Minimalism, Third Factor — evolve less stuff; UG as conceived in 80s was too big
- language could be a spandrel, or an exaptation
 - other examples: bird feathers, wings originally for temperature control