

## The Prosodical Son: The Influence of Music and Other Modalities on Evolution of Language

Research in the evolution of language is severely disadvantaged by its inherent lack of physical and empirical evidence. Consequently, language evolutionists must paint a picture of the development of language that complements the overall evolution of the human species. While some scholars incorporate the role of musicality and prosody into their arguments of language evolution, they often fall short of fully incorporating the necessity of both in the birth of language. As language evolved from a closed set of holistic communicative devices to an infinite and combinatorial system, music and musicality co-evolved into a complex and universal system. Just as musicality and prosody play a role in the evolution of language, other discourse resources, such as gesture, collaborated with vocalizations to form the beginnings of the symbolic representation of mutually conceived concepts that grant language.

This paper builds from the co-evolutionary notion that complex language could emerge once humans developed the capacity for symbolic thought: Symbolic thought could emerge once humans had access to symbolic devices. After reviewing various current language evolutionary theories (e.g., Bickerton 2009, Lee et al. 2009, Falk 2009, Mithen 2006), this paper explores a multimodal system of symbolic development with particular focus on musicality, intonation, and gesture. The simultaneity of multi-modalities makes the use of minimal pairs possible, which can isolate a word, intonational contour, or gesture for mutually agreed upon meaning across speakers. While words have won the evolutionary battle and emerged as the most productive linguistic symbolic device, this paper argues that the emergence was necessarily multimodal.

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