Goals

- describe some systems of communication used in the animal world
- evaluate the extent to which natural animal communications satisfy the design features of human language
- discuss the ability of members of other species to learn human language
- introduce some theories on the origins of human language

Tutorial Questions

a. *In each of the pairs below, one statement is typical of human language (HL) while the other is more characteristic of animal communication (AC). Mark them HL and AC respectively.*

i. The system produces an unlimited number of novel utterances. **HL**

ii. There is a closed repertory of distinctive utterances.**AC**

iii. The topic of communication is present in the immediate environment of the utterance. **AC**

iv. The system is acquired by learning. **HL**

v. The system is transmitted through genetic inheritance. **AC**

vi. The connection between signal and its meaning is arbitrary and conventional. **HL**

vii. The connection between signal and its meaning is iconic and natural.**aC**

b. Wolves express subtle emotions by different positions of ears, lips and tail. There are 11 postures of the tail expressing things like self-confidence, lack of tension, depression, defensiveness, active submission etc. This is a complex system! Suppose there were a thousand different emotion wolves could express in this way. Do they have language similar to humans? If not, why not?

- NO No: emotion does not have a grammar or syntax, or a linear aspect as language does. It is not analytic -- it does not break down concepts into smaller pieces for combination and re-combination in different forms.

Tutorial Questions (cont)

- emotion is something we use to communicate key experiences with others. We do this through many non-linguistic means, including facial expression, touch, and tone
- but forcing emotion to fit into a linear, time-sequenced, grammatical linguistic format betrays the quality of the emotional experience itself, which is why linguistic names for emotions never quite capture them

Natural Communication Systems

- If animals have the capacity to acquire human language this would count as evidence that language is not a peculiarity of human beings.
- It would argue that language is **not encoded in a module in the brain** entirely separated from general intelligence, or that it is stored and processed separately in the brain.
- It could only be concluded that animals *lack the necessary genetic or neurological requirements*.
- If we can show that *non-human animal communication systems* exist that share the features of human language, and that our closest relative have systems that *most resemble human language*,
- this would count in favor of the **evolution of language from animal communication systems**, and that language differs in degree rather than kind from these other systems.
- not finding such evidence does not, however, argue against an evolutionary story: it may be that no living species are sufficiently close to us biologically to reveal the continuity