# Chapter 2 Further Readings

(Note: This bibliography will be updated regularly.)

### Animal communication

Deciding what, if anything, animal vocalizations might “mean” is a tricky business. This paper provides a broad review and discussion of some of the challenges and methods used to think about the referential aspect of animal communication:

Townsend, S. W. & Manser, M. B. (2013) Functionally referential communication in mammals: The past, present and the future. Ethology, 119, 1–11.

### Birdsong and language

There’s a great deal of scientific interest in the parallels between birdsong and language. The following brief review article provides a useful summary of some of this research and is a good jumping-off point for further research:

Moorman, S. & Bolhuis, J. J. (2013) Behavioral similarities between birdsong and spoken language. In J. J. Bolhuis & M. Everaert (Eds.). Birdsong, Speech, and Language. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.

### Design features of language

Hockett’s notion of “duality of patterning” is evident in the vast majority of the world’s languages, but evidently, not all of them. Unlike other sign languages like American Sign Language (ASL), Al-Sayyid Bedouin Sign Language (ABSL) appears to use signs as integral units rather than being composed of a set of “phonetic” elements. The following paper is long and detailed, but offers a fascinating look at how sound structure might emerge from a very young language that initially lacks the property of duality of patterning. It will be most accessible to students with some background in phonology, the study of sound structure:

Sandler, W., M. Aronoff, I. Meir & C. Padden. (2011) The gradual emergence of phonological form in a new language. Natural Language and Linguistic Theory 29, 503–543.

### How and why do languages change?

John McWhorter has argued that not all elements of language fill a pressing communicative niche. In this readable book, McWhorter gives the reader a tour of the tremendous variety of structures and grammatical elements that can be found across languages and discusses the conditions under which some languages might be more or less complex than others:

McWhorter, J. (2011) What Language Is (and What It Isn’t and What It Could Be). New York: Gotham Books.

### Language evolution in the lab

Why does duality of patterning seem to be a core property of human languages? In the following experimental study, the authors design a laboratory study to explore the hypotheses that this feature arises naturally as the size of a language’s vocabulary grows and as its symbols become more arbitrary with respect to their meanings:

Roberts, G., & Galantucci, B. (2012) The emergence of duality of patterning: Insights from the laboratory. Language and Cognition, 4, 297–318.

Laboratory studies of language change examine how a language might change in responses to pressures from a) communicative interactions between partners and b) the processes involved in learning a new language. The following review paper focuses on the role of learning in shaping language:

Cornish, H. (2010). Investigating how cultural transmission leads to the appearance of design without a designer in human communication systems. Interaction Studies, 11, 112–137.

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