# Iconicity in the evolution of language: a resurgence

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Some of the earliest and most simplistic theories of the evolution of language have been coined "bow-wow" theories, positing that language sprung from utterances (forms) directly and iconically related to what they depict (meanings) (Ramachandran & Hubbard, 2001, 2005). In the relatively recent explosion of interest in language evolution, theories of this type have been largely forgotten or dismissed for two major reasons: (i) given that we use the auditory modality for communication, we are only able to iconically express meanings related to sound. I will argue that the former problem makes uninformed assumptions about language and language evolution, while the latter problem may find a solution in the study of cross-modality: connections between the senses. Moreover, an iconic protolanguage would offer a compelling solution to Harnad's (1990) symbol grounding problem: linguistic symbols are ultimately grounded in our perceptual system. I will review the ways in which iconic protolanguage is making a comeback (Kita, 2008), including recent experimental evidence in cross-modality, and how this can contribute to the dialogue.

## References

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