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0521781574 - The Evolutionary Emergence of Language: Social Function and the Origins of Linguistic Form

Edited by Chris Knight, Michael Studdert-Kennedy and James R. Hurford

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The Evolutionary Emergence of Language

Language has no counterpart in the animal world. Unique to *Homo sapiens*, it appears inseparable from human nature. But how, when and why did it emerge? The contributors to this volume – linguists, anthropologists, cognitive scientists and others – adopt a modern Darwinian perspective to offer a bold synthesis of the human and natural sciences. As a feature of human social intelligence, language evolution is driven by biologically anomalous levels of social cooperation. Phonetic competence correspondingly reflects social pressures for vocal imitation, learning and other forms of social transmission. Distinctively human social and cultural strategies gave rise to the complex syntactic structure of speech. This book, presenting language as a remarkable social adaptation, testifies to the growing influence of evolutionary thinking in contemporary linguistics. It will be welcomed by all those interested in human evolution, evolutionary psychology, linguistic anthropology and general linguistics.

Chris Knight is Reader in Anthropology at the University of East London. His highly acclaimed and widely debated first book, *Blood Relations: Menstruation and the Origins of Culture* (1991), outlined a new theory of human origins. He has also authored many book chapters and journal articles on human cognitive and linguistic evolution and was coeditor of *Approaches to the Evolution of Language* (1998).

Michael Studdert-Kennedy is past President of Haskins Laboratories and Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of Connecticut and of Communications at the City University of New York. He has published numerous articles on speech perception and speech development and edited or coedited several books, including *Psychobiology of Language* (1983) and *Approaches to the Evolution of Language* (1998).

James R. Hurford has been Professor of General Linguistics at the University of Edinburgh since 1979. He is the author of many books, including *Language and Number: The Emergence of a Cognitive System* (1987), and was coeditor of *Approaches to the Evolution of Language* (1998). He is perhaps best known for his computer simulations of various aspects of the evolution of language.

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The Evolutionary Emergence of Language

**Social Function and the Origins
of Linguistic Form**

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