

## Music and Language – An Evolutionary Approach to Multimediality.

Research in multimediality has, so far, not paid particular attention to the evolutionary origins of the cognitive faculties that are involved in processing the various stimuli. Quite obviously these faculties did not evolve at the same time, but rather responded to selection pressures under different and successive environmental and social conditions. Multimedial information may thus not only address different features of our mental toolbox but also different stages of our evolutionary development. Experience leaves no doubt that intermedial and multimedial communication is enjoyable, indicating that it may have served a productive and possibly even decisive purpose in our evolutionary past. In my paper I focus on the combination of music and language but also touch upon dance as another medium which is almost inexorably linked to musical performance. The relationship of word and music in historical times has, of course, been researched extensively, not only in the field of multimediality, but also in neurology, psychology, child development and various other disciplines. In addition, the respective evolutionary origins of language and music have also been in the center of academic debate. In the first part of the paper, I will briefly outline the occasionally controversial concepts and theories that have been established over the last decades. I then want to move on to multimediality and the possible significance of “song and dance” in a prehistorical world. And, finally, I will address some instances over history and in our own times which indicate that our evolutionary heritage is still at work and influences our behavior, arguing that research into intermediality and ‘word and music’ would profit considerably if the evolutionary aspects of the respective media and their relationship were taken into account.