

## Linguistic Distinctiveness in the Communication System of Animals and Humans: George Yule's Perspectives

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**Abstract:** Human language is one of the most authentic inventions of humans in history. In the primitive era, people used to imply sign language as the medium of expressing themselves or communication. Language has added a new dimension in the communication system. However, other animals are unable to use language for their daily communication as humans do. Thus, they differ from mankind. There are several reasons that function behind this differentiation of communication. Among them, the position of the larynx and the presence of pharynx plays a vital role. This analytical review also depicted the other possible factors that help to distinguish human language from other animals. The main purpose of this writing, is to distinguish the communication system of animals from humans from the viewpoints of George Yule. This paper depicts the creativity and the productive ability of humans in the language field and how we can differ the communication system of humans from other species.

**Keywords:** arbitrariness, cultural transmission, patterning, productivity

### INTRODUCTION

The evaluation of a language between human and non-human can differ according to their cognitive capacities, in case of communication (Birchenall, 2016). As per this information, this study has been conducted from the Yule's book *The Study of Language* and the main focus is on the second chapter of this book named 'Animals and Human Language' (pp. 13-22). Communication through language is one of the important tools that humans use to explore their feelings, thoughts, emotions, experiences etc. By sharing our thoughts and inner feelings and emotions, we are able to communicate with each other easily. However, the communication system is different between animals and humans, in the case of language. The language that humans produce cannot be uttered by the other animals. There are some rare cases that birds or any other animals are uttering human language, but that comes only applying the behaviorist approach. Animals do not use human language to communicate with their own species. Humans generally produce language in many ways such as arbitrariness, cultural transmission, patterning, duality, productivity, displacement etc. which animals are unable to produce. The difference in production and articulation of language is even distinct between a human child and a chimpanzee. From an experiment organized by ASL (American Sign Language) is evidence of human extraordinary power in language production. The experiment shows that a two years child is more

expert in organizing words and thoughts than a well-trained chimp. The production system of human language is simple and free yet creative, whereas the chimp only follows some follow rule system. However, the study is certainly focusing on the real-life occurrence in the field of communication system between animals and humans, and aiming to investigate the comparison between the cognitive capacities.

## **RELATED STUDIES**

The comparison between the language system of animals and humans, is not an ordinary topic to discuss in the field of theoretical research or applied linguistics. There are many related studies that have been claiming the same topic in case of comparison of human and non-human language system. In 2019, Prat's study shows that the challenges of animal communication; including behavior and its evolution, doesn't mean that the animals are getting the human language and speech. The animals are still lacking to get the vocal communication and its behavioristic approach. They have a completely different type of communication system, and they follow that system to send and receive their approaches.

Another study of Fishbein et al. (2019), claims that the human has the interlocking system of communication, which is a highly specialized network. Human's language is much more multi-faceted. The argument is clear that the non-human doesn't have the specialized network of communication like human. This kind of interlocking system can create problems to animals for their communication. Rather, the way, animals communicate with signals and responses, this is much more applicable for their species. Another fact is that the humans can apply the language in a multi-faceted way, but the problem in case of animals, is the existence of various kinds of species. The dogs communicate in their own way, whereas the chimpanzees communicate in another way. So, the various kinds of animals have their own way of communication, and this is the reason why animals can not apply the multi-faceted way of language like human.

In Beecher's article (2021), also shows to distinguish between the animals and humans' language. In this article, he has also showed the difference with help of the communication system of human language like arbitrariness, cultural transmission, productivity etc. These are the main components he takes in his study to raise the discussion. He has also showed how the semanticity is differed from human to non-human. The point of view of his study is also related to the discussion of distinctiveness in the communication system of animals and humans.

## **YULE'S PERSPECTIVES OF THE DISTINCTIVENESS BETWEEN ANIMAL AND HUMAN**

The difference occurs in the communication system of animals and human language when the communication systems get mismatched. The system gets mismatched in different ways, which has been mentioned in the introductory part. If we discuss and focus on the communication system of human language, then the difference will automatically appear before us. Arbitrariness is mainly the connection between the words and objects (Yule, p.15). Humans can easily find out as many words and objects as they can, but in case of animals, they do not use words or objects rather they use animal signals for conveying. They use the signal and response in a specific situation and a particular time.

Another system is cultural transmission, where the human can adopt the communication system of different cultures and can communicate with the people somehow or using another language. The difference occurs in this case when animals cannot adopt that cultural transmission. Yule (2020) in his book *The Study of Language*, gives an example of birds in this particular difference. Birds can't produce their songs if they have been kept separate from other birds for seven weeks. Birds have the instinctive signal that they need to produce by learning and following the other birds, whereas in the case of humans, it doesn't happen. Human can gradually adopt the communication system from where they grew up. Following the system, they can learn different kinds of language too.

Patterning can be discussed as another difference between communication systems in animals and human language. It is a common matter that we, the human, always follow a sentence structure and a

proper way to utter or pronounce a specific word. We use lexicons, grammatical terms, morphemes etc. so that we can produce grammatically correct words for communication. Whereas, animals do not have this kind of system; rather, they produce their sounds or signals that they have learned after birth. Like, a cat can only produce “meow, meow”, and to produce this sound the cat doesn't need to follow any kind of sentence structure or patterns.

Productivity is another difference between animals and human language. This particular term can also be defined as “creativity”. Humans can create another word or can reproduce a specific word for communication, whereas the animals lack productivity. According to Yule in his book (mentioned above), cicadas have only few signals and vervet monkeys have only 36 vocal calls. They can't even reproduce any other vocal calls, rather they have a fixed amount of signal and vocal calls. So, it is visible that the level of creativity in communication systems can be used as the difference between animals and human language.

Duality can also be taken as another example of communication system in language difference. This is also called “double articulation”. For example, we the human can have a distinct sound and also a distinct meaning. Like, “pin” and “nip”, both of these words are meaningful but the pattern and utterance is different from each other. This kind of economical features of human language in completely a general case. Human can easily produce these kinds of words and can combine different sounds to make a new one. On the other hand, animals do not have that knowledge of combining a set piece of words and make a new one. A dog can bark and produce the sound “woooooogr”, which can be meant the dog is crying or may be singing. But the dog can't combine the sound like “rrggrrroooow”, and can't even reproduce a new signal. Here, these two words may carry the distinct sound but can't make out the proper meaning.

Displacement is another part of the communication system that allows humans to talk about both past and future times. Even if the speaker is not belonging to the particular environment, the speaker can also be able to talk and act in general and communicate normally. It also allows humans to talk about the non-existence of things or places (batman, Spider-Man). Whereas, animals can't produce or refer to the past and future things for communication. They can't produce sounds and signals in another environment like humans.

## **DISCUSSION**

George Yule's idea of the second chapter in *The Study of Language*, portrays the difference between the communication system in animals and humans. Yule has more broadly discussed the differences through the description of communication systems in human language. His ideologies of showing the differences are similar to the other authors'. This is apparent that the other authors, have also showed their views in their studies to distinct the communication system of animals and humans, like Prat (2019), Beecher (2021) & Fishbein et al (2019).

Comparing to the other studies and discussions, the ideas of Yule in his book, are clearly distinguishing the language system of animals and humans. In Prat's study, the author is much more focused on the animals' behavioristic approach and its evaluation. Whether Yule is comparing the communication system using the features that human belongs. Though the way of differing the language system is different, but the intention is same to show the evidences to differ animals and human language. Fishbein et al. (2019), is also showing the difference, but the way of distinguishing is not similar with Yule's suggested way.

However, another study of Pepperberg (2016), shows that the animals are getting the ‘cognitive revolution’ and they will form a type of intelligence like human. Though there is a lot of controversy in this statement, but according to Yule's book, the idea is not supporting the statement. Yule has focused on the very specific difference in the communication system between animals and humans, whereas the study of Pepperberg is showing the result of animals getting the cognitive capacities gradually. So, the idea of Pepperberg is completely different with the Yule's perspective in his book.

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, it can be said that there are some distinct properties of human language like arbitrariness, cultural transmission, patterning, duality, productivity, displacement etc. which creates differences between the communication system of animals and human language. Though the other studies may give us the vague outcomes, but in the perspectives of George Yule's book, the study apparently focused on the distinctiveness in the communication system. There is another thing to be noted that researchers can find out an extensive way to do more researches in this field. There are lot of discussions, need to be investigated and observed about animal and human language, which can lead us to a new recommendation to do some more doable researches in the field of psycholinguistics.

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