



ANIMAL LANGUAGE



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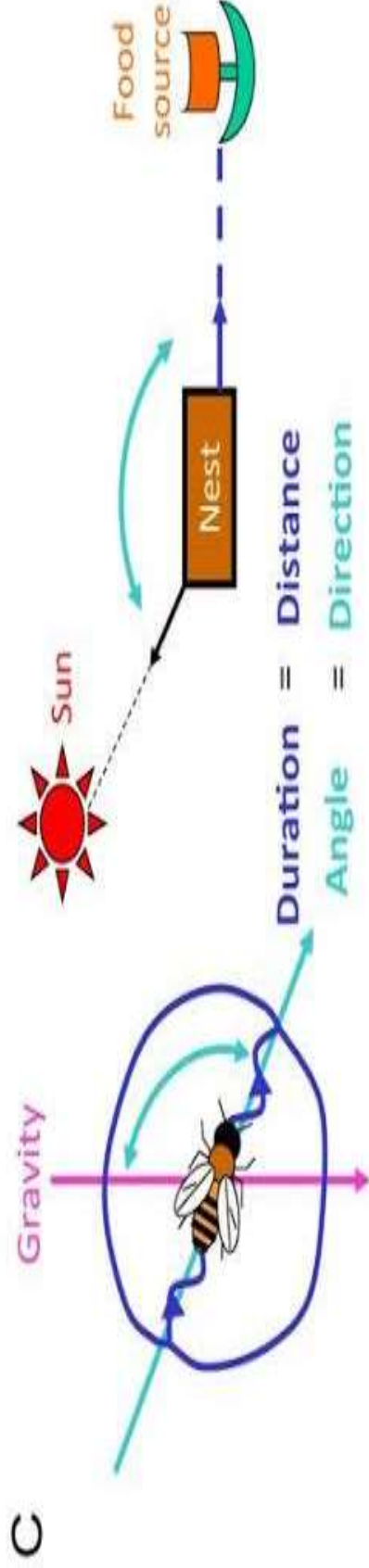
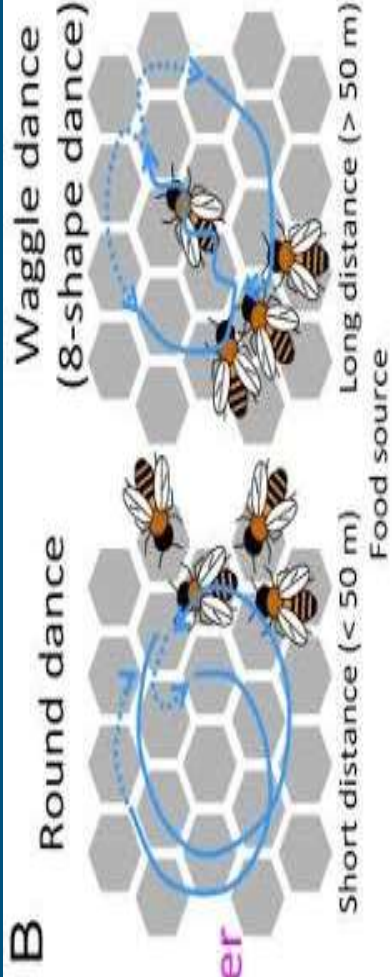


Uniqueness of Human Language

- It is language which more than anything else distinguishes human beings from animals.
- We frequently refer to language as being unique to humans.
- What then is human about human language and how is it different from the forms of communication produced by other forms of life?

Animal communication

- It is evident that different animal species show different forms of vocal and gestural behaviour.
- One of the most remarkable species is the bee, which is capable of communicating with great accuracy the location of nectar by carrying out a series of motions which have been described as a 'dance'. The bee moves in alternate directions around a constant axis, so as to describe an approximate figure 8.
- While the dance is being executed near the hive, the other worker bees form a circle around the dancer. After witnessing the movements for a few moments, the other bees make off in the proper direction and fly the correct distance before descending on to the flowers.



- Another form of bee communication occurs when part of a colony is ready to swarm. The bees assemble at a convenient point outside the hive, apparently long enough to establish a centre of operations. Then workers go off in different directions. Those bees that come upon a suitable location return to the main group and indicate by their excitement that they have found a site. Bees that fail to find a suitable location also return. If favourable reports come in from a number of directions, the swarm shows indecisiveness, moving to one side and another until a weight of opinions has formed in favour of one of the locations.

- In their communicative behaviour bees do not employ vocal sounds, but the buzzing made by the vibrating wings apparently plays a role in conveying excitement and emphasis, perhaps comparable to degrees of conviction in human beings.
- Another interesting form of vocal behaviour is imitative. There are several classes of birds that engage in sound imitation as far as conservation of the species is concerned. Perhaps it is merely an exceptional manifestation of the echoic tendency, common, in lesser degrees to many animal species. Imitation usually occurs within a species.

