

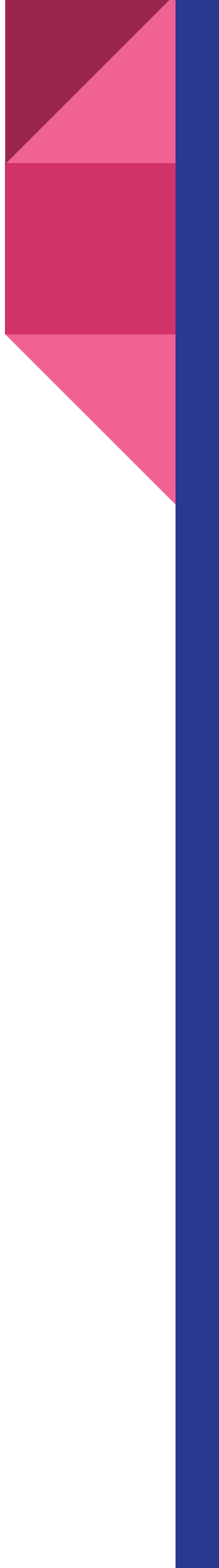
Human Communication

Part 2

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- **Duality of Structure:**

Animals have a stock of basic sounds (a cow has under ten, while gorillas and chimpanzees have between twenty and thirty) which they can use only once. That is, the number of messages an animal can send is restricted to the number of basic sounds, or, in the more complex systems such as the dolphins, a few simple combination of sounds. And there is no known internal organization within this system.



- In contrast, human language works very differently. Every language has a set of thirty to forty basic sounds which are called phonemes. These phonemes are generally meaningless in isolation. Imagine a person uttering the basic sounds 'a.k.u.t.v.r.l.j..h... Do you think it would be possible for this person to convey any meaning? These basic sounds or phonemes become meaningful only when they combine with each other in accordance with the rules of a language. So we can say that human language is organized into two levels or layers, i.e., a layer of individual sounds which combine with each other to form the second layer of bigger units like words. This kind of organization into two layers is called duality or double articulation.
- At one time, it was thought that duality was a characteristic unique to human language. But now some people claim duality is not unique to humans as it is present in bird song where each individual note is meaningless. It is the combination of notes which conveys meaningful messages. However, the complex ways in which words are combined to create an infinite number of sentences may indeed be unique to humans.

● Patterning:

- Close to the phenomena of duality is patterning. As you are aware most animal systems of communication comprise a simple list of sounds. There does not seem to be any internal organization within the system.
- Human language, on the other hand, has well defined internal patterns. There are firm restrictions on which elements (sounds, words, etc.) can occur together, and in which order. For example, take the sounds 'o', 'p', 't', and 's' in English. These sounds can be arranged in the following seven ways only:
'spot', 'stop', 'opts', 'pot', 'pots', 'top' and 'tops'. Other possibilities like 'tsop', 'ptos', 'opst', are not possible because the rules of English do not allow these.



Similar kinds of patterns are followed when words are combined to form sentences.

A similar kind of internal organization occurs at the sentence level. Human beings can automatically recognize the patterned nature of language and manipulate structured chunks of language. For example:

That beautiful woman gave me flowers.

That woman gave me flowers.

She gave me flowers.

● Creativity :

- The most important distinction between human and animal communication is that human beings are essentially creative in their use of language. On the other hand, animals have a limited number of messages that they can send or receive. For example, bees can communicate only about nectar. Dolphins, in spite of their intelligence, use a large number of clicks, whistles and squawks, to communicate merely about the same thing over and over again.
- This type of restriction is not found in human language which is essentially a creative process i.e., human beings can produce absolutely new utterances whenever they feel like it. A person can utter a sentence which has never been said before, in the most unlikely circumstances, and still be understood. Even in everyday routine communication, a person does not say the same thing over and over again.

