

DESIGN FEATURES OF HUMAN LANGUAGE

Any one feature is not unique to humans, but no other mode of animal communication possesses all of these traits

Cultural transmission: One does not inherit a particular language genetically, but children learn from parents and others. Speaking is therefore part of one's cultural behavior, acquired through learning.

Specialization: Human speech serves no other function than to communicate.

Semanticity: Language can be used to express or convey information about the outer world, and not just communicate information about an internal state or reflex.

Arbitrariness: There is no intrinsic relationship between the form of a word and the concept for which it stands.

Displacement: Humans can talk about something that is far removed in time and space from the setting where communication occurs.

Discreteness: Language is built on a small number of elemental units (phonemes—sounds or gestures) that are clearly distinct and that can be recombined into larger units (words)

Syntax: Complex rules (syntax, or grammar) link expression—in the form of words, phrases, sentences, and pronunciation—with meaning. Language involves knowing the patterns for putting words together into well-formed sentences.

Creativity: Humans can combine a finite number of sounds to generate an infinite number of statements and sentences. Completely unprecedented statements will be understood by the listener.

open system versus closed system

Interchangeability: Any humans can utter what any other human says (in many animal species the nature of messages varies according to male and female)

Multiple Purposes: Humans use language conscientiously to accomplish several different goals ----->

~~vocal-auditory channel: Language is created in a specially evolved vocal tract and received through the ears~~