

George Jacobs¹ and Arran Stibbe

Guest Editors' Introduction: Animals and Language

The twentieth century saw what could be described as a parting of the ways between humans and other species of animal in many parts of the world. Increasing urbanization and the intensification of farming resulted in restricted opportunities to interact directly with other animals, particularly free-roaming animals in their natural habitats. At the same time, changes in technology led to greatly increased opportunities to come into contact with animals indirectly through their representation in media such as film, television, and the internet. This extra stage of mediation between actual animals in the world and a human population's experience of them is extremely important, because representations necessarily are partial.

Among the forces that potentially influence representations are powerful commercial forces. They pressure for increased intensive confinement of animals, increased human use of habitats, larger catches of animals in the wild, and numerous other ways of increasing the utility drawn from animals. At the same time, these forces are resisted in a variety of directions by those working for animal welfare, rights,

or liberation, as well as by environmentalists and ecologists who are aware of the effects the treatment of animals was having on the planet.

Over the course of the twenty-first century, the relationship between humans and other animals looks set to become even more distant and more mediated. As cloning, genetic engineering, the use of animals as medicine factories, and new confinement techniques go from being a novelty to being ubiquitous, representation increasingly will become the site where the future of many species of animals is determined.

It becomes increasingly important, therefore, to understand the processes of representation and how they are influenced by the forces present in society. There have, in recent years, been a number of studies of the linguistic representation of nonhuman animals (Stibbe, 2005; Glenn, 2004; Stibbe, 2003; Schillo, 2003; Dunayer, 2001; Scarce, 2000; Kheel, 1995). This is the first special issue dedicated entirely to analysis of linguistic representations of animals and contains six new articles.

It is impossible to be neutral in the analysis of the relationship between humans and other animals because it is a relationship in which analysts necessarily are involved. All the articles in this issue have the underlying hope that the investigation of the representation of animals and the forces that influence that representation, in some way, can contribute to change—to less destructive relationships between humans and other animals. Although disinterested observation is not a possibility, this does not preclude accurate, thorough, and academically honest investigation of the data. In fact, it demands nothing less.

The articles in this issue, for the most part, rely on a diversity of interrelated theories of discourse that provide a sophisticated understanding of how particular ways of using language construct reality and contribute to social change (Blommaert, 2005; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Fairclough, 2003; Fairclough & Chouliaraki, 1999; Van Dijk, 1998, 1997). Common to these approaches is a view of social structures and language as existing in a dialectal relationship. This is not, as often is assumed, a simple relationship of language determining social structures, where changes in language necessarily change those structures. Instead, it is a more complex, organic form of interrelationship. According to Chilton and Schäffner (1997), analyses involve, “interpretively linking linguistic details . . . to the strategic political functions of coercion,

resistance, opposition, protest, dissimulation, legitimisation and delegitimation" (p. 226). In this way, the tension between opposing ideologies—as they manifest themselves in language—can be exposed, providing a first step for intervention.

The first article was written by Arran Stibbe, whose work in an earlier volume of *Society & Animals* (Stibbe, 2001) provides some of the theory underlying much of the analysis presented in this issue. In the current article, Stibbe looks at the ways in which language is used to talk about fishes: in particular, Atlantic salmon. After providing an overview of the ecological and welfare implications of intensive aquaculture, he looks at the language used to represent salmon in the Millennium Ecosystems Assessment report, commissioned by the United Nations. Although the report sets out to save ecosystems, the language used, according to Stibbe, potentially is self-defeating in the way that it objectifies fish or represents them en masse as resources. He contrasts this form of representation with the language used by Carson (1962) that represents fish as living beings actively pursuing their lives. Carson's kind of language, he suggests, is far more compatible, not only with welfare but also with the protection of the world's ecosystems.

In the next article, we move from texts dedicated to saving ecosystems to texts with a very different end in mind. Les Mitchell looks at four articles in different issues of *Farmers Weekly*, a South African magazine. Mitchell maintains that the language of the articles presents our fellow animals as production machines rather than sentient beings. Furthermore, he shows how use of the language of science portrays the entire enterprise as part of a grand march of progress. Two other threads in Mitchell's critique are (a) the deeply embedded discourse of animal slavery and (b) the kind of achievement discourse that can make the nonhumans in the animal flesh industry responsible for attaining certain standards—like so many athletes competing for medals.

One area in which language is used to talk about nonhuman animals revolves around the question of the commonalities between our species and other animal species. Andrew Goatly examines this issue from sociological, biological, and linguistic perspectives. In particular, he considers the use of metaphor, explains, and uses a tool for investigating metaphor. In his conclusion, Goatly makes the point that people's views of our commonality or lack thereof with

our fellow animals does not necessarily correlate positively with these people's actions toward other animals.

Many advocates of social change have proposed concomitant language changes. Advocates of women's rights have pushed to end the use of the word, "chairman," to represent both females and males and urged the use of alternatives such as, "chairperson" or "chair." Similarly, advocates for our fellow animals have championed language changes. The most notable advocate of such alterations is Dunayer (2001) whose book is a vital companion to this special issue. In the next article in this special issue, Lisa Kemmerer proposes a new word, "anymal," a contracted combination of "any" and "animal," intended to mean animal other than a human. Kemmerer argues that anymal is correct biologically, appropriate socially, and has a potential role to play in verbal activism on behalf of our fellow animals.

The next article also examines a particular word. However, rather than proposing a new word, this article looks at the use of an oft-used, three-letter word, "who." The authors, Gaëtanelle Gilquin and George Jacobs, investigate whether (who) is used with other animals and, if so, in what contexts—the hypothesis being that greater use of (who), rather than (which) or (that) might correlate with seeing nonhuman animals more as fellow sentient beings rather than as objects. To collect their data, Gilquin and Jacobs looked at dictionaries, grammar books, publication manuals, the practices of newspapers, news services, and a 100-million-word corpus of spoken and written language. Although some of the reference works and newspapers and news services investigated clearly restrict the use of (who) to references to humans, the authors found others that allow for the use of (who) with other animals. Furthermore, the corpus search revealed instances of (who) used with other animals. The authors discuss their findings.

Anthea Fraser Gupta also investigated the use of (who). In the final article of the special issue, she describes her use of Google to explore the language use of various sides in the debate over fox hunting: pro-hunting, anti-hunting, and neutral. Her surprising finding is that those supporting hunting were slightly more likely than hunting opponents to use (who) to refer to foxes, with the neutral side the least likely. This finding, in tandem with Goatly's conclusion, suggests what perhaps should be considered obvious, that although language analysis is a powerful tool for understanding and perhaps changing

our world and the thinking that shapes it, language is only one variable in the larger equation.

Before concluding this introduction, three more points merit attention. First, all the articles in this issue deal with English. However, the overall framework employed here is relevant to all languages. We are aware of two papers, currently in preparation, dealing with the representation of nonhuman animals in other languages: Arabic and Chinese.

Second, as seen in the discussion of photographs in the Mitchell article, non-verbal forms of communication also are highly relevant, and future analyses will need to include more such multi-modal analysis.

Third, the authors of the articles presented here are committed to the importance of analyzing the representation of nonhuman animals. Their e-mail addresses are provided. We encourage you to contact them to praise, suggest, disagree, question, and propose collaboration. As you may discover by reading the articles, the authors do not all hold the same views about the ideal relationship between humans and other animals or about the discursive interventions necessary to improve that relationship. However, the debates about these issues, as well as issues related to research methodology, have been fruitful, and we encourage you to join them.

To conclude, the last 200 years have seen humans winning new rights. Although the path has not been a straight one and many continue to live without essential rights, much progress has been made in areas such as curtailing slavery, extending voting rights, lessening discrimination, and expanding literacy. Today, calls grow louder for a consideration of what rights other animals might have (Francione, 2005). As Martin Luther King stated, "We shall overcome because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Perhaps, language awareness of the kind that appears in this special issue can play some role in bending the arc.

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Note

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The editors wish to thank the following people: Susan Amy, Vanessa Clarke, Thomas S. C. Farrell, Michelle M. Lazar, Joe Mackinnon, and, in particular, Anthea Fraser Gupta.

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