

Abstract

This work is a literature search on the ability of apes to communicate not only among themselves but especially with people. Its goal is to clear up the level of this communication ability as well as to discuss different ways how to teach apes such communication.

The introduction deals with the systematics of the superfamily *Hominoidea* and the specific characteristics of its groups. Next part is about the level of the apes' intraspecific (ape-to-ape) communication and their ability of logical thinking. The main part of the work consists of a detailed study of particular experimental projects dedicated to the abilities of apes to communicate with humans. These projects were trying to teach apes to speak English (e.g. project Gua) or to teach them an artificial language (e.g. project Sarah) or to teach them American Sign Language for deaf-mute people (e.g. project Washoe). The studied projects show that at least some apes educated in captivity are able to understand spoken English and to actively use the sign language or a graphic symbol based language. They can use hundreds of signs in such languages, they are likely to use a simple grammar and they are able to put together sentences with more than three words. Moreover, they are able to create new terms on their own, to categorize and to use metaphors, jokes and lies.

It is difficult or impossible for apes to speak human language because of physiologic and phylogenetic reasons but they can reach remarkable success in sign/symbolic languages. It seems that they learn better if the method of positive/negative reinforcement is used than with the method of reward and punishment. The education is more effective if the subject lives in a calm and stable family environment where its ability to learn spontaneously is fully fructified.

The apes' thinking and communication level is so high and has been proven so long time ago that the still persisting common opinions and attitudes are surprisingly out of date.

Keywords: interspecific communication, communication abilities of apes, intelligence of apes, behavior of apes, communication, chimpanzee, gorilla