Una reseña y análisis del discurso dirigido a animales en Ibagué, Colombia

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RESUMEN

Los animales son esenciales para la civilización humana y la mayoría de la gente ha hablado en algún momento con un animal. Los estudios sobre el habla dirigida a los animales se centran en la etnografía durante el juego, cómo se utilizan los animales como mecanismos discursivos y sólo se centran en las mascotas (i.e. no se han estudiado los animales que no sean mascotas), y todo se hace en los países anglófonos. Este estudio explora la aparente brecha en la investigación. En un estudio realizado en Ibagué, Colombia, 500 personas fueron encuestadas en un estudio cuantitativo auto0informado para analizar cuántas personas realmente hablan con animales (mascotas y animales domésticos que no son mascotas), cómo lo hacen y qué creencias tienen sobre el habla dirigido a animales. Se encontró que la mayoría de la población informa que habla con animales y que factores tales como el género, el nivel de educación, tener una mascota y la mascota que tiene ejercen fuertes influencias sobre cómo se hablan los animales. Además, el estudio destaca un conjunto de contradicciones en términos de actitud y práctica, particularmente en el uso de pronombres y la proximidad social representada en las relaciones sociales con animales que no se reflejan realmente en el contenido lingüístico del discurso. El estudio concluye que las personas en la región de Colombia hablan con los animales, no porque creen que el animal los entienda, sino porque los humanos entienden las relaciones a través del discurso hablado y como tal utilizan el discurso lingüístico para crear o establecer una relación con los animales.

Palabras clave: habla con mascotas, habla dirigida a animales, relaciones entre humanos y animales

An overview and analysis of animal-directed speech in Ibagué, Colombia

ABSTRACT

Animals are essential to human civilization and most people have at some time spoken with an animal. Studies regarding animal-directed speech focus on in-play ethnography, using animals as discursive mechanisms and only focus on pets – and all are done in Anglophone countries. This study explores the apparent gap in research. In a study performed in Ibagué, Colombia, 500 people were surveyed in a self-report quantitative study to analyse how many people actually speak with animals (pets and non-pet domestic animals), how they do so and what beliefs they hold about animal-directed human speech. It was found that the majority of the population report speaking with animals and that factors such as

gender, level of education, owning a pet and the pet actually exerting strong influences on how the animals are spoken. Additionally, the study highlights a set of contradictions in terms of attitude and practice – particularly in pronoun use and the social proximity enacted in social relationships with animals which are not actually reflected in the linguistic content of the discourse. The study concludes that people in regional Colombia speak to animals, not because they believe the animal understands them but, because humans understand relationships through spoken discourse and as such use linguistic discourse to create or enact a relationship with animals.

Key words: pet-talk, animal-directed speech, human-animal relationships

Uma visão geral e análise da fala dirigida a animais em Ibagué, Colômbia

RESUMO

Los animales filho esenciales para a civilização humana e a mayoría de la gente hablado em um momento com um animal. Os estudos sobre a música dirigida a todos os animais no centro da etnografia durante o jogo, usam-se os animadores como as ferramentas discursivas e só se centram nas mascotas (ou seja, não se estudam os animadores que não são mascotas), hace en los países anglófonos. Este estúdio explora a aparelhagem na investigação. En un estudio realizado em Ibagué, Colombia, 500 personas para pessoas que querem estudar um autoinformacion para analizar personagens realmente hablan con animales (mascotes y animales quehos son no mascotas), para fazer as coisas que você quiser sobre o habla dirigido a animales. Se encontrando a mayoría da pobleção informativa que habla com animales e aquele tales tales como o género, o nivel de educação, tener uma mascota e a mascota que tem dinamizar as influencias sobre o tema se hablan os animales. Además, el estudio destaca un conjunto de contradictiones en termos de actitud e práctica, em particular no uso de pronomes e a proximidade social representada nas relações sociais com animales que não se reflejan realmente en el contenido lingüístico del discurso. El estudio concluiu as pessoas na região da Colômbia hablan con los animales, no porque creen the animal los entienda, sino porque os humanos entram as relações com o discurso hablado e como usar o discurso lingüístico para criar um relacionamento com a comunidade con los animales.

Palavras-chave: habla de mascotas, habla dirigida a animales, relaciones entre humanos y animales.

1. Introduction

Animals play an important part in our lives and the companionship they provide is an integral part of westernized society with the pet and pet-care market exploding around the world. Humans have had animal companions for at least 12,000 years (Serpell, 1996) and during this time, animals have become an essential part of human life – both for personal and industrial reasons. It is difficult to find some part of human development or activity that does not have animals involved at some point in the process, and modern life in Colombia is the same. Most Colombians would have at least some contact with animals and for many, animals form the most significant relationship and discourse, yet animal-directed discourse has not been studied in Colombia. It is easy to dismiss this interaction – humans and animals are not equals in the act of communicating: humans are able to use language, while animals are not. The linguistic activity of humans directed at animals is usually ignored due to the animal's lack of ability to reciprocate with language and the fact that one of the two members is not human. However, these two

facts show that we have an interesting case to study - and a case that could tell us a lot about how we imagine our animal companions.

There exist several studies on animal communication and human perception of animal communication but very few on why humans speak to creatures that cannot speak back. The study of how people talk to animals could explain various interactions we have with animals and provide us with knowledge that up to now has been ignored. We assume the causes behind the human linguistic interactions directed at animals, yet we lack researched answers about interaction. There exist assumptions from a variety of sciences about human - animal dialogue, but so far, the science of language, linguistics, has ignored this discourse. The dialogue between species could show the place given to animals in society and help us understand why they have that place. Thus, this investigation starts this endeavour and investigates the population of the Colombian city of Ibagué in terms of if and how animals are spoken to, and what this says about animal-directed speech.

Literature review

To study the communication between humans and animals, it is imperative to ask whether animals have language or understand human language. That animals can communicate with humans is undeniable but whether or not they can use or understand language is another question. Fitch (2011) condenses several global studies and presents us with an extensive list of communicative factors that are not present in animal communication but are fundamental aspects of human language such as arbitrariness, discretion, displacement, productivity, and double articulation. Though animal communication can be complex, it lacks these aspects to become a language in the strict linguistic sense of the word. While there are studies that show that some animals can repeat human words, there is no firm evidence that they actually use the words and thus, language. Typical among the examples of animals that 'can talk' are birds and apes and while several birds are capable of repeating human words studies show that this is not a use of language but a repetition of sounds for breeding purposes. The case of the apes is somewhat more complex. Several studies in apes have shown that there are individuals who are able to use human words and with great precision, however, the use of words may not pass basic communication and studies indicate that they not able to construct complex communication (Haghighat, 2013; al, 2016, National Post, 2016). However, while it may be the case that animals cannot use language, this does not mean they cannot understand it, with studies such as Gabor el al (2016) showing that dogs understand human language and are able to differentiate between words and their meanings; resulting in a one-sided linguistic discourse (the communicative aims of both human and animal may be achieved though).

If animals cannot use language, the question remains why do humans speak to them? To understand this, one must look at the relationships humans have with animals. We can distinguish between 3 animal classifications according to the relationship humans have with them: pets, domesticated animals, and wild animals[1]. A domesticated animal refers to that animal that is used by the human for human benefit - whether eaten or working instrument; whereas a pet is defined as an animal that is allowed inside the house, is not eaten and to whom a name is given (Eddy, 2003). The reasons why we have pets are still under investigation and are not always evident (Blouin, 2012). It is claimed that originally humans domesticated wild animals such as the wolf and cat to use in hunting or pest control (Serpell, 1996). Blouin (2012) claims that every culture in the world maintains pets but that the pet occupies a different place in every culture and that Western cultures have kept pets for only their company for at least two centuries. He also notes that in the last few decades, the role of the pet has changed dramatically within Western society.

Psychology tends to assert that pets fill a social place for their owners i.e. they play a role in the welfare of their owner and that the role is to provide the feeling that the owner is loved by the pet (whether or

1 The human-wild animal relationship will not be analysed here since humans have minimal contact with them.

not this is actually the case) (Herzog, 2010) and the benefits of this claim are supported by evidence that pet owners are healthier (McConnel & Brown, 2011). In terms of why animals have flourished in this role, Archer (1997) proposes that the human-animal relationship is an evolutionary mechanism of the animal - that the pet manipulates the owner's emotions to achieve a reproductive advantage, thus becoming a variety of 'social parasite'. Basten (2009) develops this idea and posits that pets manipulate the human desire to care for their young and that is reflected in the '*kindchenschema*[2]' of pets – the psychological effect of 'tenderness/cuteness' associated with infant-like bodily proportions that induces the human desire to care for the individual (term invented by Lorenz, 1943). Basten proposes that the effect of kindchenschema results in the propagation of anthropomorphic features in pets (larger hears/eyes) thus resulting in the evolutionary advantage for the animal.

Sociological studies often propose vastly different theories to psychology and proposes that the human-pet relationship is more a social construction that reflects social attitudes of the moment (Arluke, 2010, Herzog, 2010). Not all cultures in the world speak to animals (Blouin, 2012) and so far, all research on why people talk to animals has only taken place in North America or Europe (Ringrose, 2015). Blouin (2012) asserts that there are differences between social classes and ethnicities (even within a single society) in terms of treatment of animals and asserts that the lower classes of society often use pets in a more instrumental manner (e.g. dogs for safety) than upper social classes who usually have animals because of their beauty and as such, a symbol of status. Ramírez (2006) also supports the social construction argument with research which showing that in the US, men often have dogs to fulfil the construction of their masculinity while women have dogs to form interpersonal relationships that are expected from their gender role.

In terms of how animals are actually spoken to, studies also note the common observation that pet owners often talk to their pets with motherese (baby talk) (Mitchell & Edmonson, 1999; Prato-Previde, Fallani & Valsecchi, 2005). Motherese refers to the speech style that is used with infants in Western societies characterized by short, direct and repeated forms, and the use of several nicknames (Mitchell & Edmonson, 1999). Motherese, though, is not universal among human societies (Harkness, 1976) and is indicative of Western childrearing practices. In societies where motherese is used towards animals, it seems to be because humans expect animals to understand short commands (Walton & McConocha, 1996). Ringrose (2015), supported by Mitchell (2001), adds that the use of motherese with pets varies from that used with human babies. In a study of the vocal articulation with both babies and pets, the researcher shows that there is a difference in the articulation that indicates that although people often use motherese with pets, the lack of corrective articulation indicates that the pet occupies a place inferior to the human baby in that the adult is not interested in correcting communicative behaviour. In the cases where animals are not spoken to using motherese, animal-directed speech is still not as complex as human-directed speech. Mitchell & Edmonson (1999) note that language directed at dogs was composed of imperatives by more than 50%. Less than 10% of dog-directed discourse was composed of questions which indicate reciprocity in communication and there is a marked absence of conversational features that maintain the pretence that the dog is an actual conversant such as we, us and let's (Mitchell, 2001, p. 203).

Tannen (2004) makes the important observation that pet talk is often not directed *at* the pet but *though* the pet. She notes that pets are frequently used as mechanisms to frame or manipulate discourse towards others in a way that had been previously noted as social lubricant by Mugford & M'Comisky (1975) and a bonding catalyst by Corson (1981). Tannen notes that people tend the ventriloquize through their pets i.e. express their own thoughts through discourse with the pet in front of others. She explains that this is commonly used as a framing mechanism to create the

2 From German. Literally 'child shaped'.

identity of family with others, and as a buffer for complaints and criticism with others. Roberts (2004) also notes that much the same happens in clinical dialogue with pets as well. Veterinarians tend not to speak *to* the animals but also *through* them as well. She notes that veterinarians use the animals as devices to communicate to co-participants and onlookers (particularly pet owners) and that the communicative goals are often the same yet also include: helping maintain a professional stance, diffusing tension with pet-owners, effacing the need for apologies, topicalizing incorrect caretaking and deflating illegitimate pet-owner complaints.

In studies about animal-directed speech, there is a strong focus on in-play[3] recordings and an analysis of pets being used as discourse mechanisms for indirect messages towards others. Furthermore, there is a complete lack of studies in the field outside of Anglophone countries. As in many westernized societies, in Colombia it is common to hear people talking to their pets as if they were babies. However, to date no study has been performed regarding how Colombians talk to their pets and their beliefs regarding animal directed speech. Although the conclusions of North American and European studies could be extended, the social context is different and thus, the extension of conclusions may not take into account the social individualities of the Latin American nation. Hence, this investigation starts to fill that gap by surveying the population of a Colombian city and analysing if and how they speak to their animals – and what that says about animal-directed speech in Colombia.

2. Methodology

2. 1 Generalities

This investigation formed the first part in an ongoing investigation into animal-directed human speech by the Universidad del Tolima. As the initial phase, this project used a survey in order to obtain a large amount of data before conducting smaller scale observation and ethnographic data.

2.2 Instrument

The survey contained 28 quantitative and qualitative questions focusing a various aspects of pet ownership and pet talk. The first 6 questions were demographic relating to sex, age, education, pet ownership and whether the person works with pets. Following were 15 Likert items examining different aspects of opinions and beliefs regarding animal-direct human speech. Questions 22 and 23 asked for the second person singular pronoun used by the participants with animals. It should be noted that the survey was not a survey into discourse, i.e. moment to moment spontaneous speech, but a self-report survey where participants were asked to reflect upon their communicative practices with animals.

2.3 Distribution and Sample

The investigation used 500 surveys distributed randomly in the city of Ibagué in the department of Tolima, Colombia. Ibagué is a regional centre in central Colombia with a current projected population of 553,600 (Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística, 2005) giving a margin of error of 4.4% at 95% confidence level. The surveys were distributed during the week of June 12 – 19, 2017 by the researchers in the neighbourhood of Santa Elena in Ibagué.

2.4 Data entry and classification

After distribution, all quantitative data were entered into the programme SPSS 22, while the other qualitative data were coded before being entered into the same programme. Given that questions 24 and 25 allowed for two broad types of answer (either a description of speech or example of speech), two types of classification had to be created.

3 That is, recordings done of people playing with their pets.

2.4.1 Classifying social relationships

For answers that gave a sample of speech; it was necessary to categorize the answers given. Thus, it was decided to classify the answers according to the social relationship that the human creates with the human in their speech with the animal. After an extensive analysis of the answers, an 11-point scale was produced to reflect the range of social relationships. Each category on the scale was given a score in order to calculate the average social distance constructed when the data was separated in different variables. The categorization and scores can be found in table 1 below.

Table 1. Category and criteria for the classification of open answers. Lower scores indicate increased social distance while higher scores indicate increased social proximity in the perceived human-animal discursive relationship.

Category	Criteria	Score
Onomatopoeia	Participant only uses onomatopoeia with animals i.e. mimics the animal's sounds. Human language is not used. Onomatopoeic communication shows a willingness by the human to interact with the animal, though a lack of human language indicates that no relationship is formed.	1
Imperatives only	Communication is limited to imperatives. Human does not expect the animal to respond apart from executing the order given. Human does not greet the animal and uses human language to facilitate instrumental use of the animal.	2
Recognized Non-Person Interlocutor	Human-animal linguistic interaction is limited to the human using human language to greet the animal and give imperatives. No further interaction is recorded. Animal is not expected to understand. Human states that animal is spoken to but specifies that they do not expect the animal to understand and that the animal is not treated linguistically as a person.	3
Treated as a person: Indifferent	Answer indicates that the animal receives the same linguistic treatment as a person i.e. they human speaks with the animal as they would with another human, although not a human with whom they are acquainted. Linguistic interaction may be restricted to reflexive comments, imperatives, greetings and basic conversation.	4
Treated as a person: Polite	Linguistic treatment is courteous and considerate of the animal. Animal is greeted and asked how it is. Consideration is given to the animal in that permission is asked etc. when imperatives are given.	5
Treated as a person: Friend	Participant specifies that they speak with the animal or treat it as they would with a friend or gives lexical indicators of friendship (e.g. uses the word amigo (friend) in conversation).	6
Treated as a person: Family member	Participant specifies that they speak with the animal or treat it as they would with a family member without specifying that the linguistic content is necessarily aimed at children. This level on intimacy implies a level of intimacy above classification 6 and may confide in the animal not seen in prior classifications.	7
Treated as a person: Child	Participant speaks with the animal or treats it as they would with a child with whom they are family above language acquisition age. Language may be simple, and intonation is indicative of child directed speech yet there is the implication that the animal understands.	8
Treated as a person: Baby	Participant speaks with the animal as they would with an infant in the language acquisition phase. This is the classification for 'baby-talk' i.e. infant directed speech.	9
Better than a person	Answer indicates that the animal is linguistically placed in a social position superior to humans. This relationship is marked by treated where the animal is given a superior social position to the human. This classification requires the participant to mark it as such.	10

2.5 Data analysis

First the demographic data were analysed by producing descriptive statistics and analysing the percentage of each rank inside the variables. The Likert questions that followed were analysed in terms of mean and standard deviation. After an initial analysis, the Likert items were then analysed in terms of the individual variables of gender, age, level of education and pet ownership. Where difference was found, the scores were analysed with a chi-square test to determine statistical significance.

The T-V distinction scores were analysed in a similar fashion to the demographic data: a percentage of use was obtained. This percentage was then analysed in terms of the same independent variables to look for differences. Where differences were found, a chi-square test was performed to determine statistical significance and the results were then put into table form.

Questions 24 and 25 were first classified using the schema described in the previous section. The questions were then given a social closeness factor by producing the mean score of all of the classifications. Following this, the different classifications were produced as percentages in order to look for general trends in the population according in terms of pet-talk or non-domestic animal talk. After simple analysis, these percentages and scores were then analysed in terms of single independent variables and given the appropriate statistical test to determine significance where needed. Comparisons were then made between the results of questions 24 and 25, with tests for statistical significance where needed.

3. Results and Analysis

3.1 Demographic information

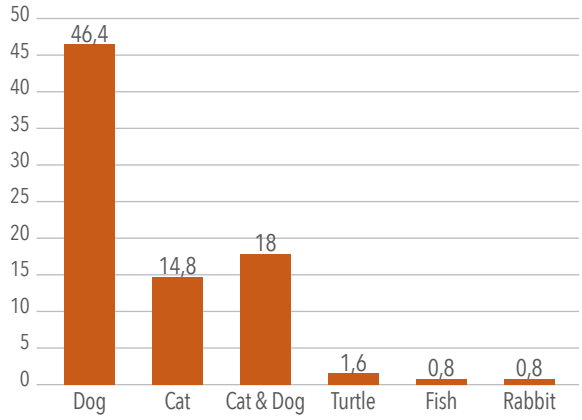
In terms of general demographics, there significantly more female participants than male participants (61.2% female vs 38.8% male)– a factor which the surveyors explain as there being more female interest in the topic. Also, as for age the great majority of the participants were young with 83, 2% in the 18 – 29 years range. The variable for level of education was far more stable with no strong bias in any field. The complete range of demographic factors can be seen in table 2 below.

Table 2. Demographic information

Demographic Category	Variable	Percentage
Gender	Female	61.2
	Male	38.8
	Total	100
Age	18 - 29	83.2
	30 - 39	9.2
	40 - 49	2.8
	50 - 59	3.2
	60 +	1.6
	Total	100
Level of education	Without formal education	0.4
	Primary school	0.8
	Highschool	34.8
	Technical education	24.8
	Pre-graduate university	34.8
	Postgraduate university	4
	Other	0.4
	Total	100

In terms of pet ownership, 82.4%[4] of the participants reported having a pet with the mean number of pets per participant being 1.8. The types of pets found in the sample along with their respective percentages can be found in figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Pet ownership. Figure shows self-reported rates of pet ownership. It is important to note the categories are not mutually exclusive and two or more categories may apply to the same respondent.



3.2 Likert Items

The Likert items were divided into three broad groups in order to contextualize self-reported animal-directed speech. The first set of questions pertained to the perception of animals and language i.e. it sought to understand if people believed animals had language and if humans and animals could come to understand the communication/language of the other. The second series examined how the participants interacted with animals whereas the final series looked at opinions towards speaking with animals.

3.2.1 Animals and language

As mentioned above, the first five Likert items measured opinions regarding animals themselves and language. Question 7 ('Animal communication is language') produced a mean of 2.656 (σ = 2.1077) – in agreement with the proposition[5]. However, given the high standard deviation, answers were far from a consensus. Regardless, these scores indicate that, as a general rule, the participants agreed that animal communication is language. This coincides with the mean produced in question 8 ('Animals have their own language') which was 2.156 (σ = 2.0029). While the standard deviation showed substantial variation in the answers, the mean reinforces the position that there is a general belief that animal communication is language.

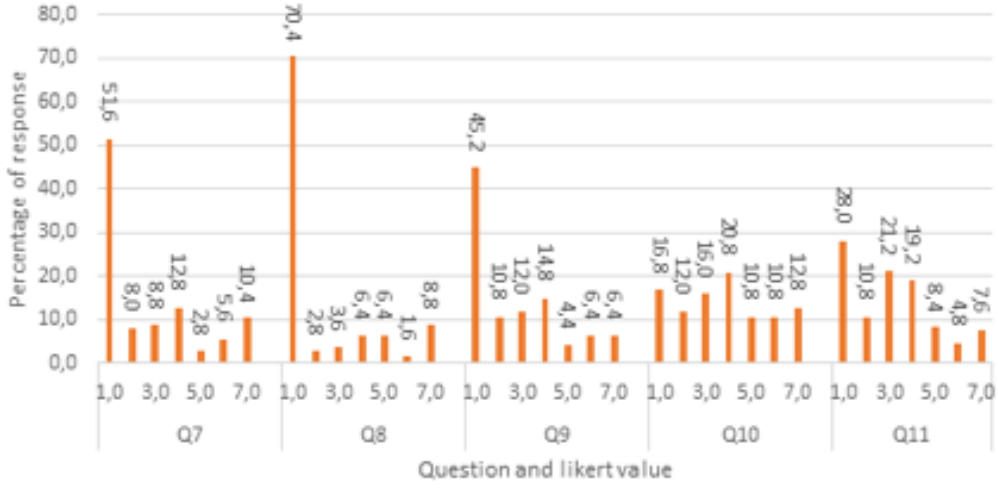
Question 9 ('Pets understand human language') produced a similar result with a mean of 2.672 (σ = 1.9339). While also producing a spread of answers, there is a generalized belief that pets understand human language. This, however, contrasts with the following question ('Non-pet animals can understand human language) which although producing significant variation (σ = 1.9527), produced a mean of 3.804 which suggests that there is a general uncertainty as to whether animals which are not pets can understand human language. The final question in this series ('Humans can come to understand animal communication') produced a mean slightly above the point of neutrality ($\bar{x}$ = 3.144, σ = 1.8415) although also providing a significant level of variation. The result, while slightly in favour, is not enough

4 We recognize that this percentage seems particularly high. However, there is no census data available for pet-ownership and, as such, it is impossible to say whether or not this percentage is skewed.

5 A 7 score Likert scale was used, so an answer of 3.5 would be considered neutral.

to make a statement in favour of the proposition and would indicate that there is a relative uncertainty as to whether humans can come to understand animal communication. Figure 2 below shows the scatter of responses for the first five Likert items in terms of percentages. As can be seen, while answers to tend to agglomerate towards one point, all produced widespread variation.

Figure 2. Percentages for Likert responses to questions 7 – 11.



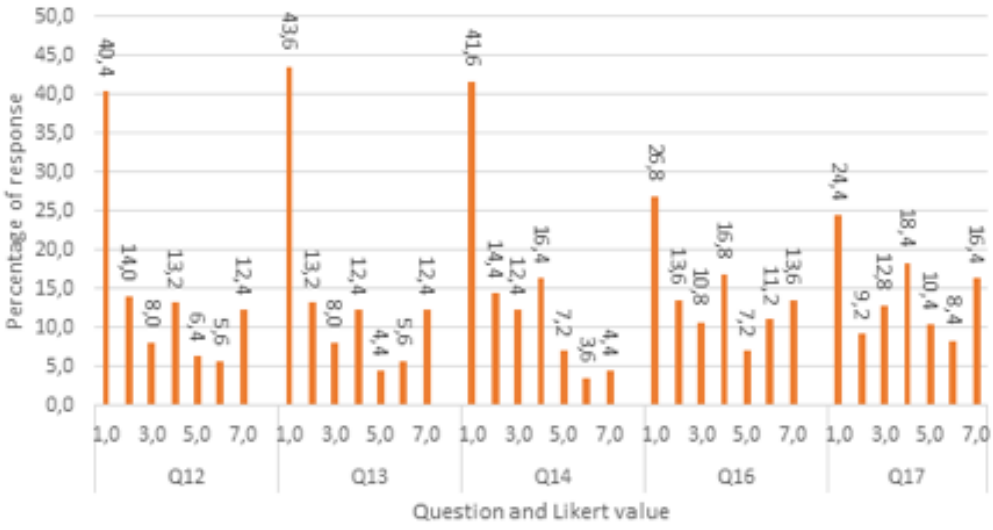
In terms of demographic variables, only one variable produced a measurable difference in responses – gender: there exists a small yet significant difference between the answers produced by men and women. Women on average produced an answer 0.3322 ($\sigma = 0.24$) more towards agreement than did men. While not a large difference, this would indicate that women from Ibagué are more slightly more likely to believe that animal communication is language, and that humans and animals can understand the language of the other.

3.2.2 How animals are spoken to

The 5 questions that followed (excluding question 15 which was used for a separate research project) related to how the participants speak to animals. Question 12 ('I treat animals as equals to people') produced a slight mean in favour of the proposition ($\bar{x} = 2.976$, $\sigma = 2.1542$). However, it should be noted that the standard deviation, as with the previous questions, was rather high and indicates a significant degree of variation of opinion. Question 13 ('I speak with my pet as I would with a person') produced very similar figures with a mean of 2.912 ($\sigma = 2.2509$), indicating that while there is a significant degree of variation, there is a slight trend to speak with pets as if they were people. Also, in a similar vein, we find a slight level of agreement with the item that followed ('My pet understands me when I speak with it') producing a mean of 2.616 ($\sigma = 1.7739$) with a standard deviation much lower than previous questions, thus indicating that there is a weak belief in the population that pets can understand their owners.

The final two questions in this section produced different trends. Question 16 ('I speak with others' pets as I would with a person') produced a neutral response as $\bar{x} = 3.520$ ($\sigma = 2.1417$), as such indicating that among the surveyed population the pets of others do not receive any special linguistic treatment. The final question in this section (question 17 'I speak with other animals as I would with a person') produced extremely slight negative results with a significant degree of variation ($\bar{x} = 3.720$, $\sigma = 2.1304$) indicating that there exists a very small trend in the population to not speak with other animals as they would with people (and thus contrasting with pets). Figure 3 below shows the percentage of responses given for these Likert items and show the level of variation present.

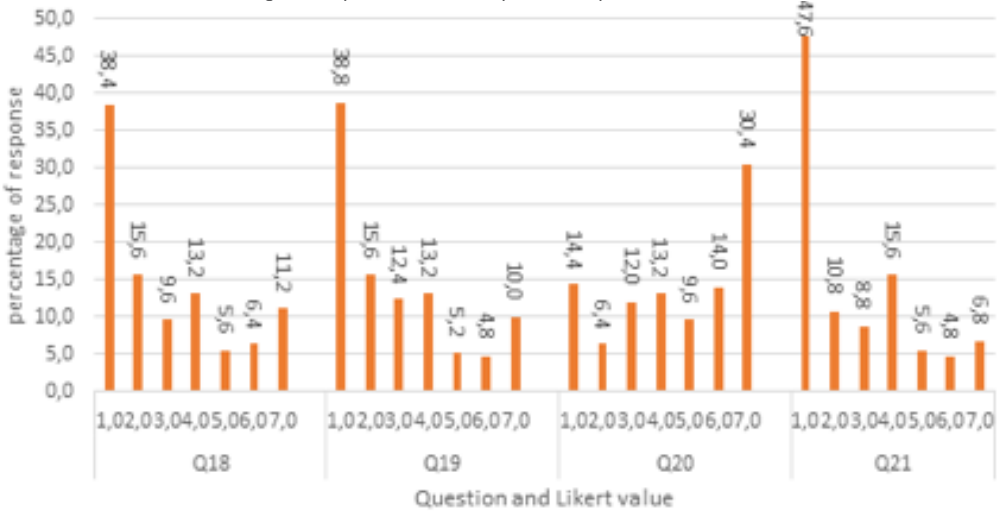
Figure 3. Percentages for Likert responses to questions 12, 13, 14, 16 and 17.



3.2.3 Attitudes towards talking to animals

The final four Likert items examined how the participants felt about humans speaking with animals with item 18 stating 'it is normal to speak with animals as if they were people'. This item produced a mean score of 2.96 ($\sigma = 2.1032$) thus suggesting a weak opinion in the population in favour of the proposition. Item 19 ('It is healthy to speak with animals as if they were people') produced a similar score ($\bar{x} = 2.848$, $\sigma = 2.0162$) thus reinforcing the prior point. The penultimate item ('Animals can learn human language') produced a weak negative result ($\bar{x} = 4.608$, $\sigma = 2.1688$) indicating that there is there a slight opinion towards believing that animals can't learn human language. The final item, related to item 18, stated 'It is normal to speak to animals' and produced an average score of 2.624, again suggesting a weak opinion that is normal to speak to animals. The figure below shows the spread of responses to these items.

Figure 4. Spread of Likert responses to questions 18 – 21.

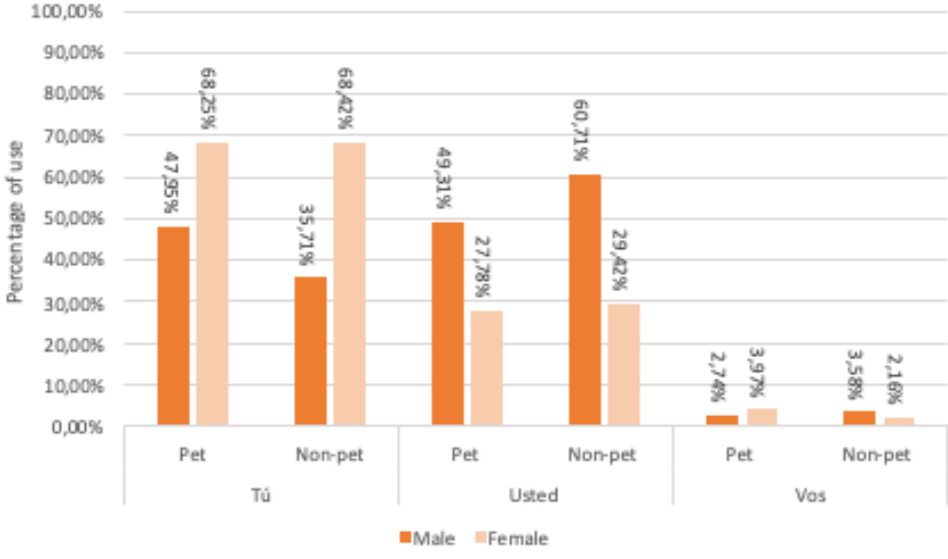


3.3 Pronoun Questions

Spanish exhibits the T-V distinction for second person pronouns, meaning that social distance is marked through the selective use of second-person pronoun options. Socially proximate relationships

are marked through certain pronouns called T-pronouns or T-forms, and socially distant relationships or relationships of respect use pronouns called V-pronouns or V-forms. In Colombian Spanish, the T-V distinction exists with the pronouns tú and vos being used to mark close social relationships ('T-pronouns') and usted marking more distant social relationships (a 'V-pronoun'). It should be noted though that vos, while noted as a T-pronoun in Colombia, is atypical in Ibagué and has only a minimal usage; as such it was not expected to play a significant role in the questions. The following two questions examined how the participants used pronouns with animals (pets and non-pets) in order to analyse the type of social distance and relationships that the participants construct with animals. The results of these questions showed that the T-pronoun usage for pets is at 64.3% and 58.9% for non-pets. Women are statistically more likely to use T-pronouns in Colombian Spanish and this is reflected in pronoun usage with animals. As can be seen in the table below, female pronoun use (with the interesting exception of non-pet vos usage) is greater than the corresponding male use. The figure also demonstrates the low use of vos in Ibagué.

Figure 5. Pronoun use divided by gender and animal classification.



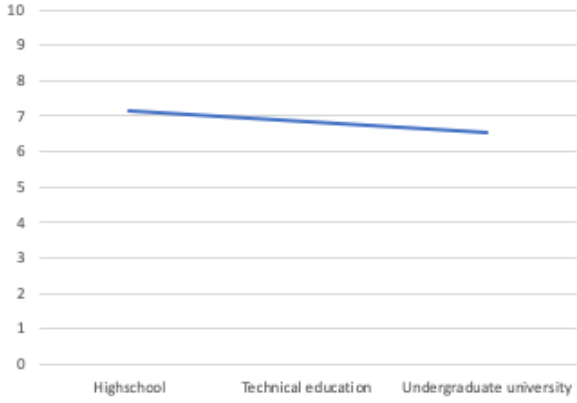
3.4 Open answer questions: Animal-directed speech

As mentioned in section 3, questions 25 and 26 asked the respondents to explain how they speak to animals (pets and non-pets respectively) and were classified using a scale that ranked the type of relationship formed by the speech and the relative social closeness of the speech.

3.4.1 Pet talk

Pets produced a large degree of close social relationship and there was an overwhelming response rate for 'baby talk' - 44.4% of responses. The average score of social closeness that pets produced was 6.856 and given a scale of 1 (non-existent relationship) to 10 (extremely close relationship), this response indicates the overall sociolinguistic relationship created with animals through speech is between 'friendly' and 'family'. For pet talk several demographic variables, when analysed separately, produced significant differences in the linguistic relationships created. The level of education of the participants produced a noticeable trend in the closeness of speech. Among the three significant populations, the results produced a downwards trend with more education - high school: 7.126, technical education: 6.839, undergraduate degree: 6.552 which statistically significant at $p = 0.1$ ($\chi 2 = 133{,}695$). Figure 6 below demonstrates this trend.

Figure 6. Social closeness score for pets compared against level of education.

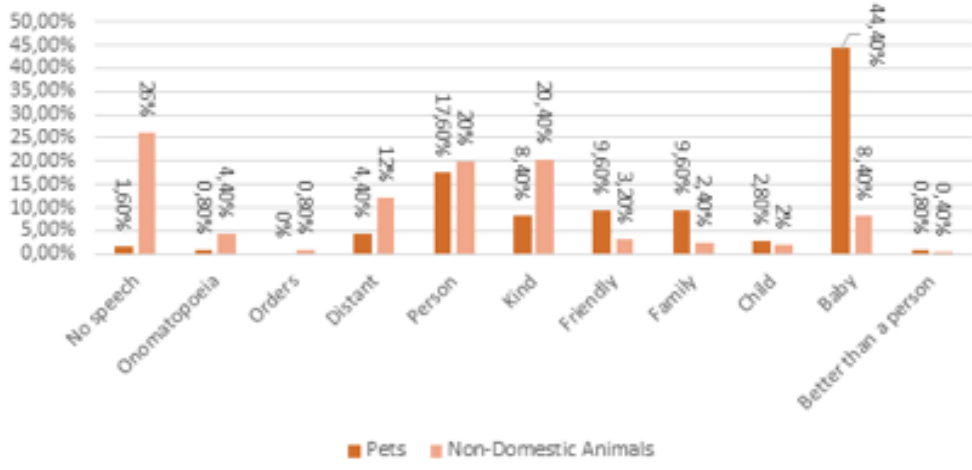


Gender provided significant differences in the social closeness factor with females producing a factor of 7.366 and males 5.804 (statistically significant at p = 0.05). The difference of 1.562 places the factors in different rankings: female-animal speech is as 'family' while male-animal speech is ranked as 'friendly'. This would indicate that among the population, females are much more likely to speak with pets as they would with a family member, while men speak with pets as they would with friends. Pet ownership itself also produced a difference of 0.617 when compared to not owning a pet (6.776 vs. 6,159) which, while not changing the category of relationship created, would indicate that pet owners are more likely to form closer linguistic relationships with pet than non-pet owners (statistically significant at p = 0.05)

3.4.2 Speech with non-domestic animals

Compared with pets, non-domestic animals, while spoken to, receive linguistic treatment significantly different to pets. With a closeness factor of 3.524, non-domestic animals fall into the rank of 'person', meaning that the participants tend to speak with non-domestic animals as they would with people. This score is drastically different to the score of 6.856 produced for pets, demonstrating a markedly different relationship. Between pets and non-domestic animals, there is an interesting shift from baby talk (which falls 36%) to neutral 'as a person' speech and simply not speaking with the animal. The comparative classifications for pets and non-domestic animals can be seen in figure 7 below.

Figure 7. Spread of classifications for pet and non-domestic animal directed human speech.



As with pet-talk, differences exist within the individual independent variables as well – in this case gender and pet ownership (education level did not produce any differences in this question). Pet owners had a social closeness factor 0.233 higher than non-pet owners (statistically significant at p = 0.05), indicating that owning a pet reduces the social distance with other animals as well. As with pets also, gender produced significant differences in the social distance constructed linguistically with animals with women producing a social closeness factor of 3.9 and men producing a factor of 3.467. This difference (statistically significant at p = 0.05) indicates that.

4. Discussion

The results provided by the survey provide an interesting image of how the people of Ibagué speak with animals. Ibagué fits within the phenomenon described by Hawkness (1976) in reference to Westernized societies having the propensity to speak to animals and the trend described by Mitchell & Edmonson (1999) that there is a strong trend towards motherese use with animals. In general, there is a strong tendency towards talking to animals which indicates that, although animals cannot speak (at least with humans), the vast majority of people for Ibagué treat them as interlocutors of some kind. In terms of the animal interlocutor, there is a difference between pets and non-pet animals (79.6% pets/61.4% other animals) suggesting that humans not only build closer linguistic relationships with companion animals but view them as communicatively different with this being reflected in differing beliefs about the comprehension of human language with pets gaining a slightly positive belief (2.672/7) and non-domestic animals earning a relatively neutral belief (3.804/7). In contrast, the combination of a lower talk rate along with a fairly low social closeness rating in non-domestic animals indicates that people talk to animals not to form a social relationship with them, but rather as a sign of respect for the animal. This in itself is interesting since it indicates that the humans perform linguistic activity knowing that it will not have results or even be understood but as a reflexive social activity. The relative emptiness of the words used on animals suggest that human linguistic activity is done to create a relationship in the mind of the human interlocutor thus creating a variety of projected human social role for the animal in the human's mind or as a reflexive linguistic exercise for the human – that the human is accustomed to express its interactions through words and does so even when the words have no effect.

Owning a pet is a significant factor in speaking with animals of any kind with a difference of 19.4% between pet-owners and non-owners in terms of creating this kind of projection. However, this difference should not only be interpreted as the owner talking to (and thus projecting onto) their own pet. Pet-owners also speak more with nondomestic animals with a difference of 19.4% to non-pet owners. Similarly, pet owners have a higher rate of social proximity than non-owners, indicating that they not only talk more to animals, but also talk to animals with more proximity than non-owners and thus attempt to forge closer social relationships with animals.

It is interesting to note that although having a pet increases the possibility of talking to an animal, this variable does not coincide with the expected T-V pronoun use. While there is an increase in the closeness of the type of relationship formed, the linguistic execution of the relationship does not match the closeness described by the participants: as Ibagué is located within the T-form preference zone of Colombia, close relationships are marked by the use of the pronoun tú. However, the lack of a correlating increase in tú use would indicate that there is a certain degree of falsity in the enacted relationship with animals i.e. the marked closeness of the language does match what the human tries to enact with the animal. Indeed, this phenomenon seems to correlate to the findings of Ringrose (2015) who found a difference in articulation quality in English animal-directed speech, in her case finding while adults are interested in the surface level interaction there is no commitment to further or deeper communication.

Furthering this point, there is an interesting disconnection between the beliefs about speaking to animals and how animals are actually spoken to. While there is a low level of agreement with the notion that it is normal to speak with animals (2.96), the majority of participants (79.6% pets/61.4% other animals) do indeed speak with animals. Similar disconnection can be seen in the proposition 'I speak with my pet as I would with a person' which produced an average 2.976 (slightly in agreement) does not connect with the social closeness factor of 6.856 achieved by pets (well above the 4.0 which designates 'like a person'). Thus, the beliefs about speech do not match the context of the animal-directed speech being that humans speak with animals though they do not regard it as particularly normal and they speak with animals as if they were humans even though they do not particularly agree that they should do so.

This disconnect between opinions and practice, along with the disconnect between speech style and pronoun use would seem to indicate that while animals are spoken to, there is a level of falsity to the discourse – the human does not seem to commit to the finer linguistic intricacies that would be expected in human-human communication. The reason behind this appears to be a combination of the low level of belief that animals can actually understand human speech and the fact that animals cannot reciprocate linguistically during the discourse. Thus while the human converses with the animal as it would with another human, being that through discourse humans form social relationships, the unequal discursive ability of the animal results in the human speaking without the same linguistic dedication as would be expected with another human.

In all measures of linguistic relationships with animals, gender provided differences. Men and women recorded differences across categories that reflect observations made in other countries. Women are more likely to not only talk to animals, whether pets or not, but have a more socially closer treatment with them. Ramírez (2006) argues that men use animals to affirm their masculinity whereas as women use them to build interpersonal relationships, and in this study, the closer interpersonal relationships enacted by women are evidenced in the high use of motherese with animals - the difference of 33.8% illustrates this, and the greater use of T-form pronouns with animals. The union of the proximity that the use of T-form pronouns gives along with the high index of motherese indicates the creation/projection of a close social relation affirms Ramirez's proposal – that women (in Ibagué) project interpersonal relationships.

As mentioned by Prato-Previde, Fallani & Valsecchi (2005) there are differences in how men and women treat pets; that men treat them as friends and women as babies; and the results of this study affirm this statement. The rate of treatment as friends for men is above that of women (14%) and affirms the argument that men often treat animals more than friends. Women, in contrast, have a lower rate of friend-speech, but a much higher motherese rate (33.8% higher than men) and a higher overall social closeness index in addition to a higher rate of T-form pronoun use would affirm both the Ramirez and PratoPrevide, Fallani & Valsecchi claims. It also seems that the linguistic activity of the men with pets is directed by the social conditioning for the construction of the masculinity. This is constructed through the bonding with animals that are domestic, and companions yet do not inspire a high degree of kindchenschema (e.g. cats). The linguistic activity involved is friendly, but more distant than what is expected of the woman who is expected an interaction based on kindchenschema and linguistic closeness. Thus, the results demonstrate that men and women perform different social relationships with animals and that these relationships are reflections of the socially expected relationships of the time – distant relationships of solidarity for men, and relationships of nurturing for women.

5. Conclusion

In Ibagué, Colombia most people speak with animals. How people speak to animals, and indeed the animals that are spoken to, depends on a variety of factors such as gender, education level and even the pet that one may have. However, in contrast to the vast majority of the population that speaks to animals (and

like people), there is only a slightly positive overall opinion that speaking to animals is normal and that they should be spoken to like people. Another contradiction in speech and opinion can be found in the use of TV pronouns and the social closeness with which animals are spoken – there is an overwhelming trend to enact socially close relationships with animals, but these relationships are not reflected in the linguistic mechanics of those relationships. In the professed close relationships, there is a noticeable lack in T-form pronoun use that marks social closeness in discourse and this disconnection in addition to the disconnection between belief and practice regarding discourse in general indicate that humans speak to animals, not because they are having genuine discourse with the animal but, because humans understand relationships through linguistic discourse, they use linguistic discourse to create or enact a relationship with the animal. However, the human does seem to recognize the futility of speaking with animals and does not commit to the complete linguistic depth available in the discourse that would be used with humans (e.g. pronoun differentiation) while still committing themselves to the act of speech in order to enact and understand their relationship to the animal.

It must be understood though that this investigation is an initial look at if, how and why people speak with animals. The results identified interesting conflicts between belief and practice, along with pronoun use and social proximity that require further research in order to reach more advanced conclusions. The same goes with the interesting differences in terms of how the genders speak with animals and enact their social gendered roles with animals, and how people speak with individual pets and animals be it cats, dogs or livestock. These different variables and phenomena show interesting variation in this investigation, however further, particularly using discourse analysis and other qualitative techniques would greatly expand upon the results provided by this study. However, this study provides some interesting initial insights into animal-directed human speech and shows that how we speak with animals is an interesting field of linguistic enquiry that is only now being explored.

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