ALA Chapter 7 - Animal Cognition and Language

[Name of the Writer]

[Name of the Institution]

ALA Chapter 7 - Animal Cognition and Language

**Introduction**

Our Planet Earth has been inhabited by a number of species. Some of these species live on the land, whereas other species live in water. All these living being or species have been blessed with something extraordinary; some of them have tentacles on their body to protect themselves, whereas some of them are blessed with a gift of extraordinary speed to run and kill their prey. One of the common element that can be seen in almost all the animals is the ability to speak or produce a sound.

Humans have been blessed with an extraordinary capability to think. Humans can see and analyze the situation according to their capability and have the ability to react according to their own perception of the situation. One of another thing with which the human beings are blessed is the ability to speak. They react by speaking according to the situation and the sensitivity of the issue. Moreover, they are also blessed with the ability to control the tone of their voice in order to make it soft or hard.

The initiation of language was also done on the basis of this ability. Humans started forming words out of voices in order to sound more clear and logical. Before that, the use of voice and sound was only done to alarm or inform about the emergency situations or stress over some point. The exact origin of the human languages is still unknown, but experts and scientists after various careful analysis and studies have come to the conclusion that most probably, human linguistics started developing approximately 100000 years back. Anthropologists and scientist have also come upon the opinion that the origin of human linguistics was the continent of Africa.

As most of the animals can also produce voices and exhibit reactive behavior, many scientists are of the opinion that animals, like humans, can also think and thus use language as a reaction to show emotions or explain their thinking. Many scholars, experts, and scientists present their views that animals have also developed different forms of languages and use these languages to express their thoughts, emotions, feelings, and views on different phenomenon. Only humans are unable to understand these languages because of the difference in sound formation and the form of communication that is being adopted. Moreover, since this “specific language” or form of communication is adopted by the animals for the species of their own kind, and it is completely understandable to only the animals who belong to their own particular species, which is why humans are not able to comprehend and understand it, but those animals completely do.

Experts are divided on this point; there are various schools of thoughts that have been presented and advocated by them in order to prove their point, but the whole debate that whether animals can think or not and do they use properly formulated language to communicate with each other, and even with humans, can be summed up into two broader perspectives. Two popular views that have been adopted by the experts in this respect are

**Side #1:** Animals are capable of thinking and using language in ways that are similar to those of humans.

**Side #2:** Animals do not think or use language as humans do, and are not capable of doing so.

**Discussion**

Experts, scientists, and scholars have put a considerable amount of work on both sides of the debate. They have come up with different pieces of evidence and proofs their point of view. These pieces of evidence are backed up by validated data collected through repetitive experimentation. These experiments have constantly provided results in favor of the hypothesis that was proposed by the researcher which is why both sides of the debate hold equal value in the books of science and research.

**Side #1: Animals are capable of thinking and using language in ways that are similar to those of humans.**

Many researchers and scientist have the opinion that animals can think and feel in the same way as humans. They can also express their feelings, their joy, their pain, and their emotions in the same manner as humans do. The only difference likes in the way that is adopted by the animals. Animals try to convey their messages to humans as well but due to the language barriers, it becomes almost impossible for humans to comprehend this message. The only way that humans understand the feelings and condition of animals is through their gestures and constant voices. For example, dogs wiggle their tail when they see their owner or favorite person; it is an expression of joy. Cats play in the feet of the person they like; it also shows an expression of happiness and exhibits that the cat likes the person.

In some cases, the tone of the voice made by the animal also makes it clear to the humans that through which condition the animal is going on. For example, cats purr when they are around their favorite person (Jamieson, 2009). Various animals cry when they are in pain, which exhibits their physical condition. One of the perfect studies that sum up all these notions in a comprehensive study is the book by Robert W. Lurz. The book carries the title “The Philosophy of Animals Minds” and presents the ideas in a very logical and elaborate way that animals do think, just like humans.

**Side #2: Animals do not think or use language as humans do, and are not capable of doing so.**

Another approach that is adopted by the anthropologists, researchers, scientists, and even veterinary doctors is that animals cannot think or use languages, neither animals can think on their own, nor they are able to do so. Moreover, the formation and use of language is a trait that is only limited to humans, it cannot be utilized and demonstrated by the animals, because they have not been bestowed with the capability to do so.

The explanation behind this school of thought, presented by these experts that the brains of animals are not developed in the way human brains are developed. The human brain is a much complex structure that is capable of processing multiple functions at a time and it can resolve a number of complicated issues in a similar time frame. It also forms the basis of the argument that why cannot animals communicate in a language. The brains of the animals are not developed enough to process and form the words. They can surely make the sounds but cannot form proper words because of the complexities involved in the formation and processing of languages.

Lesley j. Rogers presents this concept very intelligently in his publication “Minds of their Own; Thinking and awareness in animals”. The author also argues that if it is said that animals have their own thinking and they can think like humans, then they should have the same moral and ethical responsibilities just like humans (Rogers, 2018).

**Personal Opinion**

After a thorough analysis of the arguments presented at both the side of debates, I personally think that that the experts who say that animals have thought of their own are at a much logical side. I have not come upon this conclusion just by reading these two books, or by listening to some arguments, but my judgments are backed up some serious reasoning and logics. I have gone through a lot of literature, readings, videos, and experiments that prove that animals can think and make decisions just like humans. It is an obvious fact that they cannot complete the complex processes and work on higher level of complicated tasks just like humans, but they can undergo a little level of complicated tasks.

This has been proven by a number of researches and experiments carried on by many scientists on different animals. These animals mostly include mammals like chimpanzees, monkeys, elephants, dolphins, and whales. A number of experiments have proved that these animals have emotions and feelings and can express their pain. In addition to this, these animals have also been found to feel the pain of other animals, whether they belong to their own species or not. Elephants have been found to feel the pain and cry when their baby dies. Wolves have been found to adopt the cubs of other wolves and even other species if their parents have died at the time of birth.

**Conclusion**

In a nutshell, it can be seen that scientist and experts have put a great deal of effort in proving their points that whether animals can think or not and if they can think, what level of thinking is demonstrated by them. Multiple experiments have been conducted and a number of books research articles and publications have been published by the advocates of both sides of the debate but still there has not been any final conclusion for this. In my personal opinion, I think that animals can think, feel and express their pain, obviously not like humans, but they do.

**References**

Jamieson, D. (2009). What do animals think? The philosophy of animal minds, 15-34.

Rogers, L. J. (2018). Minds of their own: Thinking and awareness in animals. Routledge.