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# The gestures of a gorilla: Language acquisition in another pongid

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### Abstract

A female lowland gorilla, Koko, has been engaged in an ongoing language program since July 1972 when she was 1 year old. During the first 30 months of training she acquired a vocabulary of 100 words in American Sign Language which she spontaneously combined into meaningful and often novel statements of up to 11 signs in length. The gorilla is using a rapidly expanding vocabulary of signs to express semantic and possibly grammatical relations similar to those expressed by human children in the early stages of language acquisition. Patterns of generalization, gradual increase in mean length of utterance, and innovative use of gestural language are discussed in relation to data available on children and chimpanzees.



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