The Faculty of Language: What is it, Who has it, and How Did it Evolve?
Marc D. Hauser, Noam Chomsky, W. Tecumseh Fitch

With a self explanatory title as *The Faculty of Language*, Hauser, Chomsky and Fitch try to explain the evolution of language in humans and argue that relatively less interdisciplinary work has been done in this field. Considering this article appeared in the magazine Science Compass under the Neuroscience feature, goes to say that limited progress has been made in studying language as a linguistic, biological, anthropological, psychological discipline. The authors, through this article urge the scientific community and the readers to help further language studies.

Most of the issues discussed and information presented is meant for a scientifically oriented community; however, there were some ideas that shone through. Firstly the distinction between Faculty of language in the broad sense (FLB) and in the narrow sense (FLN). A substantial part of the article goes into definition and explanation of what these are and which of these two faculties are innately human and the role they play in language evolution. The authors propose several hypotheses about the evolution of language. The authors also spend considerable amount of time in reviewing the past work in language and communication in animals and insinuate that the depth of inquiry into human communication and language systems has been sparse.

Apart from the body of matter in this article about language and its evolution, what was striking was Fig. 4 on Page 7, the system of imitation in the animal kingdom. This diagram clearly illustrates that the distribution of imitation of sounds in animals varies. It was interesting to see, by the colored lines, the ways animals differed in responding by imitating sounds upon hearing them from their parent species. What was most illuminating was that dolphins have a far superior imitation response than that of apes, our predecessor. One might think that if language was evolutionary, that apes would have a well developed system of language, but this is clearly disproven by the research presented in this article.
The conclusions that Hauser, Chomsky and Fitch arrive at are clearly defined and logically presented to achieve a much broader and practical perspective in language studies by urging fore thinkers from multiple fields to share their insight and work collaboratively. The motto of this article comes through in the conclusion when the authors reinstate that more empirical and comparative studies in language and communication are required. Apart from the literature review presented in this article, the references section gives the reader a broader idea of the interdisciplinary nature of language. It is almost an irony that a discipline that poses much opportunity for research has not yet been milked to its fullest capacity. One can share the feelings of the authors that although human communication is a well researched area, delving into the faculty of language would help refine and maybe understand the complex nature of humans better.

**Primates on Facebook**

*The Economist Print Edition*

Aptly titled, *Primates on Facebook* gives a realistic picture supported by anthropological research on social networking. By advertising its unique selling proposition as one that “[Facebook] helps you connect and share with the people in your life”, actually hits a barrier and reveals its true essence when faced with anthropological research. To support this point of view, *Primates* introduces the concept of the Dunbar number – the number of people that the brain allows to form stable networks with, proposed to be 150. In light of this insight, it is sort of delusional that people of facebook join upon the belief that it can help maintain and create vast networks of people. Solely going by the Dunbar number philosophy, it almost seems ironical that facebook, although it allows a platform to meet and interact, does not enhance or improve the quality, quantity or even the frequency of interactions. Although anthropological research cannot answer all questions about social networking, bringing in experimental studies in causal relationships, online ethnomethodology could lend more dimension to this issue.
This article lays the path for further research on Facebook in particular and online interactions in general. Some of the interesting findings mentioned in the article were about the variance of sociability of men and women, the interactions with core and peripheral friends etc. Also interesting was the conclusion that “even those Facebook users with the most friends communicate only with a relatively small number of them.” Unlike the popular belief the Facebook philosophy is based upon – “connecting and sharing with people in your life”, These last sentences in the article accurately capture the reality that has led to the wildfire–like success of Facebook: “people who are members of online social networks are not so much “networking” as they are “broadcasting their lives to an outer tier of acquaintances who aren’t necessarily inside the Dunbar circle......Humans may be advertising themselves more efficiently. But they still have the same small circles of intimacy as ever.” Now that we know that people use Facebook as a portal to broadcast their own information, more than keeping in touch and interacting with them, this can be verified and put to test and social experimentation that can explain the why’s of this behavior.

In sum, it is about time that Facebook and social networking came to mean the same thing or came to have a definition in renowned dictionaries of the world. However, it would be interesting to see what definitions of Facebook emerge out of this phenomenon that has taken over our attention from work and play.