

Technology

This new technology may soon be able to translate your pet's sounds into words

Have you ever wondered what your dog is trying to tell you? You may be in luck.

By Jason Murdock

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Animal lovers may soon be able to strike up conversations with their furry friends, according to a report commissioned by internet giant Amazon. One author of the study, futurist William Higham, believes the technology could be a reality within the next decade.

The findings come from a report called "[Shop the Future](#)" which was commissioned to coincide with the launch of the retailer's new platform under the same name. Alongside Higham, the paper was co-authored by [London-based futurist Anne Lise Kjaer](#).

The idea of so-called pet translators has existed for a few years now, but the technology behind the products is yet to catch up to the vision. Thanks to artificial intelligence (AI) and machine-learning projects being spearheaded by academics that may soon change.

"Innovative products that succeed are based around a genuine and major consumer needs. The amount of money now spent on pets – they are becoming fur babies to so many people – means there is huge consumer demand for this," Higham told [The](#)

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er what it wants. Despite

the lofty ambition, however, any timescale for release remains murky.

The Amazon-funded researcher based his analysis on the work of professor Con Slobodchikoff from Northern Arizona University, who has dedicated 30 years to studying the language and behaviours of North American prairie dogs using cutting-edge technology.

Using his research, Slobodchikoff is currently attempting to raise the necessary funds to build a fully-fledged cat and dog translation device.




"So many people would dearly love to talk to their dog or cat or at least find out what they are trying to communicate," Slobodchikoff said. "A lot of people talk to their dogs and share their innermost secrets. With cats I'm not sure what they'd have to say.

"A lot of times it might just be 'you idiot, just feed me and leave me alone!'"

The professor plans to use algorithms to the "language" of pets using huge databases of recorded sounds. Not everyone is convinced it will work. Juliane Kaminski, a psychologist at Portsmouth University, believes animals' sounds are not language as we know it.

"We would not describe dogs' forms of communication as language in the scientific sense [but] they do give out rudimentary signals of what they want and how they're feeling," she said, noting this could be as simple as the wagging of their tails to the left or right.

Some similar products already exist – albeit in rudimentary stages. Back in 2010, Google released its "Translate for Animals" tool which remains in a beta stage. "We hope that Translate for Animals encourages greater interaction and understanding between animal and human," the firm said.

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