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Functions of Language

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Abstract

Language acts as a vital instrument for human interaction, fulfilling various roles that go far beyond simple exchanges of information. This paper delves into the theoretical perspectives on language functions put forth by Roman Jakobson and Geoffrey Leech, two distinguished linguists whose models shed light on the intricate nature of language utilization. Jakobson's framework outlines six essential functions of language: the referential function, which conveys objective information; the expressive function, which showcases the emotions and attitudes of the speaker; the conative function, which seeks to sway the actions of the listener; the phatic function, which fosters social connections; the metalingual function, which is concerned with discussions about language itself; and the poetic function, which highlights the aesthetic qualities of linguistic expression.

Contrariwise, Leech categorizes language functions into five distinct types: the informational function, which focuses on the delivery of factual data; the expressive function, which reveals the speaker's emotions; the directive function, which aims to impact the behavior of listeners; the aesthetic function, which pertains to the creative and artistic aspects of language; and the phatic function, which serves to enhance interpersonal communication.

Both theoretical models underscore the delicate and adaptable nature of language, asserting that it extends beyond being just a medium for transferring information to also serve as a ministry for emotional expression, social connection, and creative artistry. This paper seeks to conduct a comparative examination of the theories proposed by Jakobson and Leech, evaluating the contributions each makes to our comprehension of language's varied roles in human interaction.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 What is Language

It is not a simple task to define language. Multiple linguists attempted to define language in multiple manners. Nevertheless, a thorough analysis of the definitions will reveal that they are all lacking in one way or another. Many questions will be raised by these explanations. Language serves as a communication tool. It serves as a channel for communicating to others our feelings, thoughts, and ideas. "The framework of human communication which consists of the structured arrangement of sounds (or their written representation) into larger units, e.g. morphemes, words, sentences, utterances," is how Jack C. Richards and Richard Schmidt define language. In everyday speech, it can also refer to non-human communication systems like bees' "language" and dolphins' "language."

Edward Sapir describes language as “ a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols.” Since language can convey more than just "ideas, emotions, and desires," this definition is a little lacking. Body language, sign language, and animal language are just a few examples of the many implications that fall under the umbrella term "language."

The distinction was first clearly defined by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, who established the modern field of linguistics, using the French words *langue* for language as a concept, *langue* (Chomsky's competence) as a specific example of a language system, and *parole* (Chomsky's performance) for the actual use of speech in a given language (Trask, 1999, p.92).

1.2 Functions of Language

Writing letters or notes to the milkman, gossiping with friends, giving speeches, and conversing with ourselves in the mirror are just a few of the nearly limitless ways we use language. Even though we use language for a wide variety of purposes, when you stop to think about it, there are a few recurring purposes that are typically fulfilled. Some appear to be so commonplace that they hardly register as functions, while others are more ethereal and nearly abstract. However, it's crucial to understand that, from a linguistic perspective, they are all equally significant. Language itself does not discriminate, regardless of the social significance we assign to different functions. First and foremost, it's helpful to differentiate between language's macro and micro functions. As the name implies, micro functions address specific individual uses, whereas macro functions are related to the broader, more general goals that underlie language use. Let's start by examining a few of the micro functions.

1.2.1 Micro Functions

- It is physiological function, To release nervous/physical energy. Although this may seem like a rather insignificant function, language use actually serves a number of physiological purposes. If you're a sports fan watching your favorite sport on TV, you might get the overwhelming urge to yell at the players during some thrilling parts of the game: Go on, don't mess around, for heaven's sake, shoot! Although the instructions are completely pointless and have no communication value, they do let us let go of pent-up energy that would otherwise be unbearable.
- To provide a record (recording function), Though not necessarily more significant, this use of language is more overtly "serious" than the previous two. We use language all the time to write down the things we want to remember. It could be a short-term record, like a shopping list or to-do list, or a long-term record, like a journal or some type of history (Alshami,2019,p.p3-4)

1.2.2 Macro Functions

- The interpersonal function, The relationship between ourselves and other people or things is the focus of several of the micro functions. It is obvious that we use language as a personal medium in addition to conceptualizing the world. Our relationships with both living and inanimate objects contribute significantly to our sense of identity, or who and what we are, and language plays a crucial role in this process of personalization. One could argue that this function is more concerned with how we linguistically bring ourselves into being than it is with creating the world. Prioritizing the interpersonal function of language is involved in activities where language is used for phatic communication, communication, or the release of physical or emotional energy. Furthermore, people can perform this function exceptionally well without necessarily having the capacity to perform the ideational function as well.
- The poetic function, Any functional explanation of language must take into account the aspect of human nature where we play with the world instead of conceptualizing it or interacting with it. The term "poetic" in this context does not refer to the capacity for poetry writing. It refers to the capacity to create the world as a play area. We make ourselves and others happy in this way, but we also accomplish a lot more. By manipulating language for our own personal enjoyment, we make the world safer and less dangerous (Alshami,2019,p.p5-7)

1.3 Uses of Language

It is believed that language serves as a tool for communicating concepts and viewpoints to other people. Additionally, it is used to get other people's opinions and ideas. The language is used in written, spoken, and non-spoken forms. Signs and gestures are used by the people to communicate. It differs from signs and gestures in that it uses sounds, which have meaning for both users and listeners. In contrast to emotional sounds, which are mechanically and intentionally produced under the influence of pleasure, annoyance, anxiety, and amazement, speech sounds are normally and consciously expressed. Language has two components: the inner one, which deals with the meaning one wants to convey, and the outer one, which deals with expression (Kapur,2020,p.3).

Section Two

2.1 Jakobson's Function of language

The actual flexibility of communication that comes from mastering all six functions is sometimes confused with technical competency in the four domains of reading, writing, speaking, and listening by many textbook authors and industry professionals. If a learner lacks the ability to clarify meaning (metalinguistic function) or express oneself (emotive function), how can he be deemed fluent? Or perhaps she lacks the phatic function, the ability to maintain a connection with her addressee. Students' language competency will increase if they are more aware of Jakobson's six communicative roles (Cristin,2017,p.1).

2.1.1 The Phatic Function

The relationship between speakers is the focus of the phatic function. Its main goal is to draw in, maintain, check, validate, or break this connection. It can be made up of predetermined phrases that are culturally or non-culturally bound, such as wow!, well, I will not keep you, and really? or statements that could be categorized as "small conversation." The presence or absence of phatic sequences can significantly affect the nature of the interaction between speakers, despite the fact that they are occasionally ignored or viewed as having less significance because of the poor transfer of operative information. Phatic utterances should be used, especially when starting a discourse.

The use of the phatic function not only improves the connection between speakers but also raises the listener's assessment of the speaker's competence. Intermediate and advanced students have passively accumulated a sizable foundation of phatic function words from English-language media, especially television shows and movies, according to a 1998 study done at a Japanese university. In an activity where participants took on the roles of speaker, participant, and observer, the facilitators instructed the students to make a list of every phatic phrase or sound they could think of. The main duty of the speaker

was to deliver an engaging story, and the audience's brief answers were meant to support the storyteller and demonstrate sincere interest (Cristin,2017,p.16).

In casual conversation, the phatic function is used. Teachers might remind students that small talk has a phatic function rather than a referential one since it focuses on the relationship between speakers rather than the presentation of information, even though it may include some referential aspects. Students must master the language and social norms necessary to maintain a conversation, remain attentive to their interlocutors, and effectively interact with others, regardless of whether they are learning English for work or pleasure. In order to perform professional duties like conducting a meeting or delivering a presentation, they might also need to be able to connect with the participants or listeners (Cristin,2017,p.17). Teaching the Phatic Function contains several benefits for example :

- Activate students' background knowledge of appropriate phrases/topics
- Consider power differential between speakers/participants
- Design activities that focus on improving ability to attract/establish, prolong, check, confirm, or discontinue connection
- Illustrate and emphasize the impact of phatic function on perceived proficiency
- Practice application of phatic function in relevant contexts
- Supplement phatic utterances with appropriate extralinguistic elements.

2.1.2 The Metalinguistic Function

The utterances that deal with language itself (of a linguistic nature), or what is frequently referred to as "code," are the focus of the metalinguistic function. It can be used to discuss grammatical or semantic structures, give students resources to track their own progress, and clear up any confusion. It is also a crucial component of early language development for kids learning their first language as well as for those learning a second language. When young infants start associating specific sound and stress combinations with tangible objects or abstract concepts, On occasion, they must use this metalinguistic function, or code, to verify what they are hearing (Cristin,2017,p.21).

Three types of utterances or portions of utterances that demonstrate non-understanding are known as triggers. Intelligibility, the first category, generally refers to the inability to understand a single word; comprehension, the second category, is put at risk when an entire sentence or utterance is incomprehensible; and interpretability, the third category, is the comprehension of the interlocutors' underlying intent or purpose in saying what they say. If one person is unable to comprehend why they are being asked a particular question or why a particular topic is being discussed at all, the third trigger may manifest.

A (response) is a statement made by the original speaker that strives to correct the misunderstanding and acknowledges it in some way. According to the study in question, "the speaker's answer comprised describing the item with synonyms, definitions, paraphrases, or illustrations in over half of the cases of non-understanding connected to intelligibility" (Watterson, 1998, p. 392). Therefore, increasing pupils' vocabulary and their capacity to respond to or offer such responses will raise the possibility that they will be able to communicate effectively with other speakers (Cristin, 2017, p. 21).

Jakobson distinguishes four possible relationships in these clarifications: messages referring to messages, which are typically expressed as direct quotes or reported speech ("I did not hear him, what did he say?" "He said turn left!"); codes referring to codes (New York City is the location that bears that name); a message referring to a code ("A foal is a young horse" or "Foal is a four letter noun."); or a code referring to a message via shifters, whose reference varies depending on the context, such as demonstrative, possessive, and personal pronouns (Holenstein, 1974).

The pronoun "we" is one shifter in English that can be confusing since it is not always obvious to whom the speaker is referring or whether the audience is involved. Additionally, "you" has some ambiguity because it can refer to a singular or plural other and, like "we," it does not clearly define who is included, which is why it is occasionally necessary to clarify. Students can more successfully resolve misunderstandings and answer uncertainties if they are prepared to ask for or provide each of these clarifications. Additionally, it might

help them comprehend the level of ambiguity that can be anticipated when utilizing shifters of this kind, which is crucial for students from cultures that place a great value on avoiding uncertainty.

Metalinguage serves as a tool for students to discuss and examine their own language development in addition to resolving possible misunderstandings. Students can gain more agency in their language learning process by modeling metalinguage and providing a space for this self-reflection. One example of a framework that might be given to students as a manual for recording and evaluating their own learning is the vocabulary analysis (Cristin,2017,p.22).

2.1.3 The Poetic Function

The Poetic Function, sometimes referred to as the Aesthetic Function, deals with language whose main emphasis is on its inherent beauty. The harmony that distinguishes it as a poetic utterance or work of auditory art, as well as the depth of sound and texture. "Poetic texts do not always need to lack the other functions. They only have a supporting role, similar to other language genres where the poetic function is present but only in supporting roles (such as in commemoration speeches, political slogans, and advertisements) (Holenstein, 1974, p.164). Because the human mind seeks patterns, rhyming poetry has been used throughout history as a tool for teaching and preserving important messages.

Many of its examples do contain elements that make them "become conscious in [their]'self evaluation,' which promotes and cultivates the latent structures that pass unnoticed in the set of ordinary discourse towards the referent," even though this function is not limited to what is typically classified as poetry or prose (Holenstein, 1974, p.163).

Some elements beyond rhyme which can be easily identified are imagery, diction, rhythm, meter, and repetition; these elements can be studied in the context of existing works of art such as William Wordsworth's *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* or Edgar Allen Poe's *The Raven*, After that, learners can use the same elements to produce their own form poems. A referential statement might become poetry by the use of diction, or word choice. Mark Twain wrote,

“the difference between the almost right word and the right word is really a large matter (Cristin,2017,p.23).

2.2 Leech’s Functions of Language

Leech claims that language consists many functions like :

2.2.1 The Informative Function

Language's informative role includes both giving and receiving information. The content is typically assumed to be valuable and credible. Language is used, for instance, to voice ideas, offer counsel, make announcements, lecture, criticism, or report on news, as well as to ask questions and gather feedback. Information exchange is at the heart of daily discussions. Leech (1974) states that "the informational function that everyone seems to assume is most essential" (p.53). It provides fresh knowledge. It is dependent upon value and truth (Crystal,2005,p.227).

Leech (1966) asserts that the informative role is the most crucial since it enables us to convey messages, provide descriptions, and provide our audience with fresh information. In fact, the best term to characterize this function is message. Terms like truth and value are also associated with the informational function. Certain words that provide no specific information are employed to convey attitudes and moods. Swear words and other exclamations are clear instances of these terms. This purpose of language is to convey impressions and feelings rather than to convey a message (p.59).

2.2.2 The Expressive Function

Ideas, thoughts, and feelings are expressed and produced through language. Since the goal of expressive language use is to communicate emotion, it may or may not contain any actual information. For instance, the word "Ouch" itself is not always employed to convey information, but it does convey the hurt. In the performing arts, music, and literature, expressive speech has the capacity to bring joy and humor (Crystal, 2005,p.228).

The writer or speaker makes an effort to convey his emotions. He or she reacts to what they perceive. This feature might provide a clear picture of the writer's or speaker's personality. Poetry and literature are the best examples of this type. Actually, this function expresses and inspires particular emotions. Such statements include "I am quite delighted" and "I had a lovely trip." These examples demonstrate how they reflect the speaker's or writer's emotions (Hargie, 201,p.166).

2.2.3 Directive Function

"Eat your healthy food" is an example of directive language used in informal communication. Language is used to create and uphold social order. Directive language creates norms of expected behavior in specific situations. Common examples of directive language that promote health and safety in society include laws, rules, and policies. We use language as a direction to try to change other people's views or behaviors. Instructions and requests are the most basic uses of the directive function. This social management function emphasizes the recipient's end of the message rather than the originator's end. However, it is similar to the expressive function in that it generally places less weight on conceptual meaning than on other forms of meaning, especially affective and connotative meaning (Leech, 1974,p.216).

In addition, Perrine (2005) asserts that language's directing role is employed to generate particular behaviors or responses. A command is an example of such a function. A request is an additional illustration of this function. This function is somewhat comparable to the expressive function in that the situational and affective meanings of a phrase are more significant than its overall meaning. Social control and interpersonal engagement are key components of the directing function (p.70).

2.2.4 The Phatic Function

The ability to maintain open lines of communication and maintain positive social relationships is known as phatic function. The communication channel is correlated with this linguistic function. It can be used to start, continue, or end a communication line, check if the conversation can go, or draw the listener's attention and see if they are still following the line of communication. Actually, the goal of this poetic function is to preserve social relationships or group cohesion, where the information is used merely for polite purposes rather than for the true one. Greetings (starting, introductions, farewells, and standard courteous questions are the main examples of this function (Cohen, 2005,p.279).

2.2.5 Halliday's Functions of Language

According to Halliday (2002), language is always a tool for meaning-making, and even a baby who is mute is learning to communicate through language. The infant cannot talk, at least not in his mother tongue, just as he cannot walk but is learning how to utilize his body. Through these experiences, the youngster is learning, and although his protolanguage is made up of simple content/expression pairs not even words yet, much less higher order systems it still conveys meaning and has practical purposes in the outside world (p.141).

According to Halliday (1975:43), language serves seven purposes for young children. Kids are driven to learn language because it fulfills specific needs or functions for them. They are:

- **Instrumental:** This is when the child uses language to express their needs for instance (Want juice)
- **Regulatory:** This is where language is used to tell others what to do (Go away)
 - **Interactional:** Here language is used to make contact with others and form relationships (Love you, mummy)
 - **Personal:** This is the use of language to express feelings, opinions, and individual identity (Me good girl)
- **heuristic, imaginative, and representational,** They assist the youngster in adjusting to their surroundings.
- **Heuristic:** This is when language is used to gain knowledge about the environment (What the father is doing?)
- **Imaginative:** Here language is used to tell stories and jokes, and to create an imaginary environment.
- **Representational:** The use of language to convey facts and information (Halliday ,2002,p.153).

Conclusion

Language acts as a means of communication that enables the sharing of emotions, thoughts, and concepts. It also encircles non-verbal communication systems, such as those used by “bees and dolphins”. There are two main aspects of language: the internal aspect, which relates to the intended meaning, and the external aspect, which concerns how that meaning is expressed. Language serves multiple purposes, including physiological, recording, interpersonal, and poetic functions. Micro functions pertain to physiological roles such as releasing physical or emotional energy, documenting experiences, and individualizing our perception of the world. In contrast, macro functions emphasize interpersonal roles like personalizing interactions and fostering a safer environment. Language can be expressed through written, spoken, and non-verbal mediums, employing gestures and signs for communication.

The six communicative functions identified by Jakobson play a vital role in achieving language proficiency. The phatic function emphasizes the importance of sustaining a relationship between interlocutors, which may be shaped by both culturally specific and universal expressions. For learners, it is essential to grasp the language alongside the social conventions that facilitate effective interaction. Meanwhile, the metalinguistic function pertains to the exploration of language itself, providing a means to analyze grammatical and semantic elements. This function is instrumental in the foundational stages of language acquisition for individuals learning both their first and additional languages.

Jakobson identifies four types of relationships during clarifications: messages that reference other messages, codes that refer back to codes, messages referencing codes, or codes that link to messages through contextual shifters. By seeking or offering clarifications, learners can more effectively address miscommunications and resolve ambiguities. Metalanguage becomes a valuable resource, allowing students to reflect on their language development, clarify potential misunderstandings, and take greater control of their learning journey. Additionally, analyzing vocabulary can offer students a structured approach to documenting and assessing their educational progress. Also, this research includes several functions by Leech and Haliday perspectives.

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