NOBEL
Journal of Literature and Language Teaching

Volume 12, Number 2, September 2021, 277-291
available at http://jurnalfahum.uinsby.ac.id/index.php/nobel/article/view/399

DOI: 10.15642/NOBEL.2021.12.2.277-291

A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT OF FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE WITH REFERENCE TO BÜHLER, JAKOBSON, AND HALLIDAY

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Article Info

Article History:
Received March 2021
Accepted August 2021
Published September 2021

Keywords:
Functional Linguistics, Bühler, Jakobson, Halliday, Language Functions

Abstract

This paper attempts to describe and compare the functionalist explanations of the language of Bühler, Jakobson, and Halliday. These three functionalists are not the leading figures to propose the theory of functions of language, but their descriptions of the theoretical framework and the natural selection of language usages have proven to be more credible and therefore accepted by the linguistics community today. Since these functional insights are original conceptions, there have been significant theoretical developments, and there is now a large evidence base to authenticate the contemporary theoretical development. This study, thus, discusses the specific claims of the theoretical framework of the three functionalists, highlights their similarities, and differentiates major characteristics on the queries of how the functionalists explain their observations of functions of language and theory of language explain the multiplicity of language functions. This comparison has revealed that the functionalists initially have perceived the importance of an individual's language as a social need and the ubiquity of these comparisons. The complexity of social comparisons presents a potentially fruitful explanation. Further, this paper recommends that explanations be considered for studying languages and other semiotic resources.

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p-ISSN 2087-0698
e-ISSN 2549-2470

INTRODUCTION

Language plays a vital role in human lives. Language is one of the modes of meaning making-social semiotic resources invented by human civilization and is the most important resource of linguistic communication in social processes (Halliday, 1978). Language is an exclusively human property, and humans can use it to communicate with each other. Nowadays, human language is realized acoustically, visually-spatially, and graphologically only by itself or amalgamated with other social semiotic resources (Hodge & Kress, 1988; Leeuwen, 2005). It is used to express and exchange information and knowledge, prompt human activities, committed itself to doing something in society. It opens, keeps, and ends social interactions in a context and channels and interchanges the aesthetic of verbal artifacts. In other words, language is a system that helps people express thoughts, feelings, meanings, and serves different purposes through speaking, listening, writing, and reading by using signs and sounds.

When exchanging their thoughts and feelings by using their natural languages as resources for making meanings, people do not habitually realize what actually language is doing or what they are doing with language (Finch, 2003). However, there is a social group behind every human language, and it is a crucial element of communication among that group. Language is used by groups of people to meet their needs on every occasion. They do it with a particular purpose. If a person from a certain group uses their language, s/he chooses linguistic elements and organizes them consequently to accomplish their needs.

Similarly, a distinct number of languages are born articulated, constructed, and used as a collective thing among different groups of people. These languages consist of tens of thousands of linguistic signs, organized systemically in structures to make meaning(s). This organization of language usages exhausts the functions of those elements of organizations individually and holistically. Some of these functions of a language are so conventional that they are ever noticed. Some other functions are very noticeable or even abstract.

E.g. Tamil clause:

1. *Naan maambalam saappidukiren.*

   (I mango eat.)

   I eat mango

   (I - naan + eat –saappidukiren (present tense) + mango -maambalam)

Though Tamil has been identified ‘structurally’ as an SOV language, ‘functionally’ its grammar allows people to use the same linguistics elements in different ways which are common, meaningful, and acceptable. Those are:

2. Naan saappidukiren maambalam.

3. maambalam saappidukiren Naan.

4. maambalam Naan saappidukiren.

5. Saappidukiren Naan maambalam.

6. saappidukiren maambalam Naan.

In the above examples, the elements of a clause are organized in different positions with structural meaning but different in experimental or referential and textual and informational meaning. Hence, to identify and explain them, it is required to have holistic conceptual theories and interpretable models. Functions refer to what elements of language do in a real context instead of what they might mean literally. The use of functions of language to communicate is natural. As demonstrated by the above example, one structure may have various functions; thus, the appropriacy, formality, and degree of the functions must be considered to understand how functions work in a context.

To find out the functions of language, some questions need to be administered related to language elements and their functions in a structure:

- How is the language used by social representatives/individuals?
- How does language operate in different socio-cultural contexts?
- How does language function in structured discourse and text?
- How are functions of language organized and expressed with different meanings?

Looking at structure only from the outside or inside, this domain lacks understanding language functions and defining the same. Heterogeneous thinkers, theorists, grammarians, and linguists have tried to understand and identify the functions of language oriented towards evolving a modal according to their perspective of language functions. On the whole, it is realized that what has been discussed in this regard in the past are not functions of language but functions of certain parts interrelated with language. Functions of language have to be explained and modeled, looking at the structure of linguistic elements from both inside and outside.

At the same time, focusing only on the function of linguistic elements can turn into the mistreatment of just organizing specific clauses for specific situations. Mixing the functions of linguistic elements and organized structures gradually as language users improve their understanding of linguistic elements' underlying structure and function will help them put appropriate phrases into use to obtain their language functional goals. Hence the key objective of this article is to investigate the development of the theory of the language through a comparative study specifically focusing on the language explanations of Bühler, Jakobson, and Halliday.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

For more than two millennia, functions of language have been a phenomenon among scholars who had tried to identify and explain their findings as their conceptual frameworks and models. As Elissa (2017, p. 28) stated, interest in the use or functions of language has a history in the western tradition that dates back to antiquity insofar as classical. Later, scholars were concerned with language use in logic, rhetoric, and poetry and with ontological questions broadly on relationships between languages, thought, and reality. Hence, it can be stated that the functions of language are a theory that has been used to describe the act of effective communication since the past.

In ancient Greek, Debra (2002) explains, scholars from the Academia of Athens - Heraclitus, Cratylus, Plato, Aristotle, and some other colleagues - were asked to expose the viewpoints that may answer as explanations to a projected problem on the relations between words and objects. They were asked whether 'names' are 'conventional' or 'natural' and whether 'words' have an 'intrinsic relation.' They stated that language is an 'organon' - a tool, an instrument for communication. One significant diagnostic of these works is that they allow for perspectives that are difficult to determine based on objective circumstances whether they are acceptable or unacceptable, correct or incorrect, and there is no single predefined solution. However, their interpretations were self-influenced.

Eco (1976) elaborates that in the seventeenth century, English poet John Milton defined language as "the instrument conveying to us things useful to be known." Later, in the preface of his dictionary published in 1755, the greatest lexicographer Samuel Johnson convinced that language is a tool to convey thoughts and feelings. These instrumentalists conventionally agreed that a language is a tool or instrument for achieving the needs of exchanging thoughts and feelings. Following that, even during the period of the father of modern linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure, it has been recognized that a solid understanding of the research process in languages, mainly functions of language, is required as a prerequisite for the development of a proper framework, analytical method, and theories for the field of linguistics.

Saussure (2003) considered human beings to have a language faculty and that faculty of every language has a system of rules and structures (langue) to produce text (parole). Saussure's perception of the construction of language is the arbitrary nature of the sign. To be more specific, there is a number of natural languages consuming a number of distinct words for the same object. From the interpretation, he clinched that there is no intrinsic arbitrariness

between language and objects. Saussure's ideas impacted most of the theoretical studies in human language in the twentieth century.

Subsequently, Karl Bühler (1990), who modeled the 'organon' concept of language in which he moderately acquired some ideas from Plato, developed the concept of language as an instrument. This idea became very influential among linguists. Unlike Plato, Bühler created one of the most important aspects of language - functions of language. During his period, other scholars in the field of linguistics, philosophers, and psychologists were also very much concerned with his ideas and influenced them over the years.

In the same way, during 1930, one of the modern literary theorists, Roman Jakobson (1971), and some other linguists from the Prague school of linguistics were also intemperately influenced by the ideas of Saussure, but still, see to important work on communicative functions of language. For them, language is a formal abstraction. It has a set of units subject to rules about structure between its units. The most common criticism about this perception is explaining the meaning of language usage and the loss of the view about functions of language.

At the same time, the Prague school emphasized functional structuralism. One of the co-founders of the school, Mathesius (1936, 1975), developed a theory of information structure with functional characteristics. He criticized it as a weakness to view language as a whole system. His thinking prevailed until 21st-century scholars reflected them still further. One of the students of Mathesius, Vachek (1976), elaborated the theory based on the idea of the variation that spread throughout the language system, making the variation between the focal point and the periphery of that system, has paid much to the improvement of contemporary developments in linguistic research. He emphasized that linguistic researchers have to pay more attention to the role of language and how to study the usages of language as a system.

According to Malinowski (1936), the usage of language in a situation should be studied based on a theory. For that, he developed the concept of context of a situation in which the text is uttered. Further, he elaborated the context of the situation as an environment where all kinds of text are produced. His observation is that an "utterance has no meaning except in the context of situation." With this theoretical approach, he classified the functions of language into the four "essential primitive uses of speech: speech in action, ritual handling of words, the narrative, 'phatic communion'" (Malinowski, 1936, p. 309). For that reason, it is important to see Malinowski as one of the necessary pillars of pragmatics.

Malinowski's functional concepts about language suddenly began to influence European grammarians and linguists in general. The notion of context of situation influenced British linguist J. R. Firth. Firth (1935) has pointed out that all studies in linguistics are the study of

meaning, and all meanings of language are the functions in a context of a situation. To describe the context, he drafted a framework that could be used to study text in context. For that, he identified phenomena to get the meaning of the text as follows:

1. participants in the text of the context of a situation;
2. actions of the participants in that context;
3. surroundings and other related features of that context; and
4. effect of an expressed action; what changes were brought.

Halliday (1985, 1994) collected all ideas about the notion of the functions of language, analyzed them, and developed a conceptual framework to interpret the functions of language. Later it was known as the theory of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), formerly known as Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Systemic Functional Grammar, unlike other structural linguistic methods, emphasizes the parts of language and their organization as central functions of a language.

DISCUSSION OF THE MAIN THEMES

Bühler's Model of Functions of Language

In the first half of the twentieth century, Karl Bühler illustrated the concept, the linguistic representational functions of natural language through his model of language as organon (1990). Bühler presented the most often remembered identification of the triangular model of language functions based on Plato's explanation of language in Cratylus.

> I think it was a good idea of Plato's when he claims in Cratylus that language is an organon for the one to inform the other of something about the things. There is no question that such information takes place, and the advantage of taking it as the starting point lies in the fact that all or most other cases can be derived from this one typical case by reduction; for as far as fundamental relationships are concerned, informing by means of language is the richest of the manifestations of the concrete speech event. The list the one - to the other - about the things names no fewer than three relational foundations (Bühler, 1990, pp. 30–31).

Bühler presented it in papers published in 1933. However, it had already been pre-formulated as a concept of three basic functional dimensions of language in his article on sentence-theory published in 1918. He referred to the three functions as an 'organon-model,' as follows:

1. *Ausdruck*: indication of the speaker's feelings and attitudes- expressive function
2. *Appell*: influencing listeners' reactions - appeal function
3. *Darstellung*: objects and state of affairs - representation (Bühler, 1990).

After some time, Bühler redeveloped the model by emphasizing that each language sign has three semantic functions. “It is a symbol by virtue of its co-ordination to objects and states of affairs, a symptom (*anzeichen, indicium: index*) by virtue of its dependence on the sender, whose inner state it expresses, and a signal by virtue of its appeal to the hearer, whose inner and outer behavior it directs as do other communicative signs” (Bühler, 1990, p. 35).

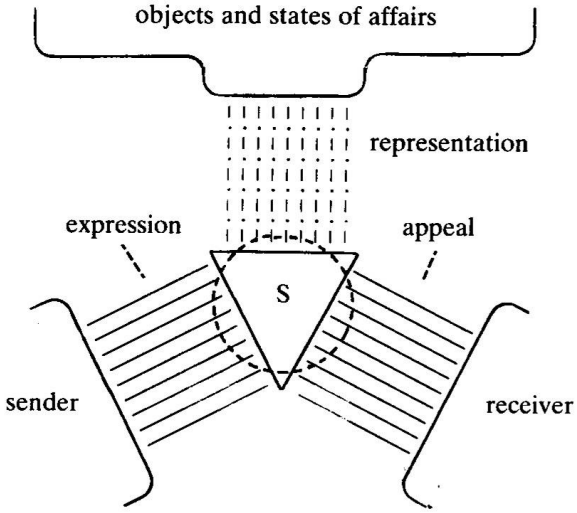

Figure 1: The Organon Model (1934) by Karl Bühler

In this model, three additional components and functions of Jakobson can be added to the inner triangle. The code is formed in the upper left corner linking the sender to the object and register. The upper right corner linking the receiver with the object and register is the message. The corner connecting the sender and receiver is the channel. To put it another way, without a channel, there is no common context; without a message, there is no sender; without a code, there is no receiver. It is the sender who shapes the message and can do it for his benefit, no matter what it means and whether someone receives it. The receiver’s arrow points to the code. Channel and context are interdependent because there must be a common memory or experience to have a common frame of reference.

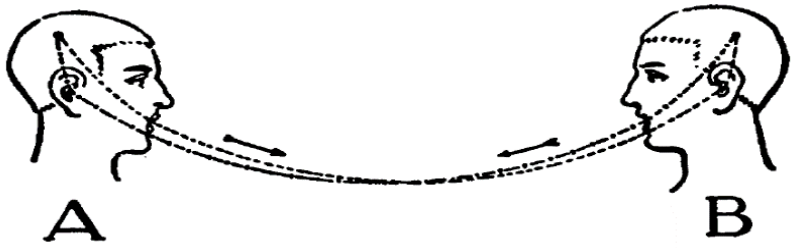

Figure 2: Components of Communication Process (Sender-Receiver) Bühler (1934)

The most important difference between the 1934 versions of the organon-model and Bühler's previous (1918, 1927) concepts of language functions is the impact of Saussure's *Cours de Linguistique Générale* (Course in General Linguistics), published in 1916 and became the most influential book for contemporary intellectuals. Then it was translated into German in 1931. Bühler gives careful consideration to Saussure's definition of the sign and the langue – parole distinction. He criticizes Saussure's presentation of the 'speech circuit' as a relapse into outdated 'psycho-physics' and insists that language comprises different types of signs (Bühler, 1990, pp. 31–34). Bühler cites three communicatively oriented theorists as authorities in support of the organon-model: Philipp Wegener (1885), Friedrich Christian Karl Brugmann (1925), and Alan H. Gardiner (1932).

To be fair to Bühler, it must be pointed out that the work of the organon-model (1934) concentrates on the representational function and thus covers only part of the theoretical horizon of the organon-model. Despite the criticism, the model has proved its enduring value as a powerful stimulus for debate. It became particularly influential for the development of functionalist language theories, via its quotation (ironically, as the "traditional model of language") and augmentation to a six-functions-model by Roman Jakobson's essay *Linguistics and Poetics* (1960), which informed later functionalist theorists, such as Dell Hathaway Hymes (1967) and Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday (1978).

Roman Jakobson's Model of the Functions of Language

In the twentieth century, Russian theorist Roman Jakobson influenced contemporary theorists, linguists, and intellectuals by pioneering structural analysis of language, poetry, and art. His extraordinary writings such as *Metalanguage as a Linguistic Problem* (1985), firstly published in 1956, *Linguistics and Poetics* (1960), firstly published in 1958, and *Linguistics and Communication Theory* (1971), firstly published in 1960, were grounded to draw his model of communication.

In his model, Jakobson adopted Saussure's ideas from the *Cours de Linguistique Générale* and transformed them into his interpretations. Also, Jakobson was influenced by Shannon and Weaver's (1948) model of communication (1964) and Buhler's (1934) functional models of organon. Jakobson established his model focused on structures of language and its basic functions to exchange information between communicators.

According to Jakobson, language is to be studied in all the differences in its functions. He differentiates six communication functions of natural language. All functions are related to a dimension of the communication process. The communication model formed by Jakobson is

given below where the communicative stratum in capital letters and the accompanying functional stratum within brackets in small letters:

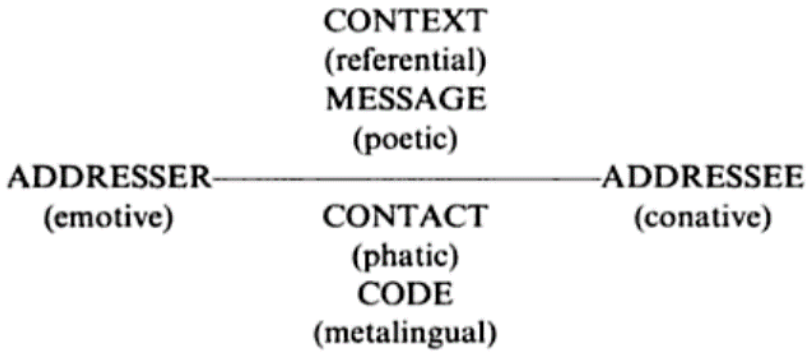

Figure 3: Roman Jakobson's communication model (1960)

Concerning the Jakobson model, ADDRESSER (the communicator – utterer or writer) sends MESSAGE (in different modes – spoken sounds, written text, images, emoji, etc.) to ADDRESSEE (the communicator – listener, hearer, audience, reader, viewer, and receiver). To be successful with the communication, the message needs a CONTEXT, its setting may be small or large, and it can be verbal or nonverbal; a CODE (common discursive mode, common language), mutually understood by communicators entirely or at least partially; and a CONTACT, the physical channel and mental connection among communicators allow communication to move in and continue.

According to Jakobson (1985, p. 115), Bühler's model was "confined to these three functions – emotive, conative and referential – and the three apexes of this model – the first person of the addresser, the second person of the addressee, and the 'third person' proper – someone or something spoken of."

Jakobson derives from Bühler's model the concept of the "functions" of language and the problematization of information received by a receiver (Bradford, 1994). In Bühler's model, the recipient does not simply break down the communication engaged with; the communication is understood to mean the effect on the recipient, which depends on the overall communication situation, including the internal elements of the sender and the status and behavior of the recipient and their relationship with the referrer. The Jacobson model is also a model of the transmission of communications from the sender to the receiver and the distribution of the six functions performed by speech.

According to Jacobson, every act of communication consists of six elements. They can be tabulated as follows:

Table 1. Six Elements/Factors of Verbal Communication by Jakobson (1960)

Target Factor	Source Factor	Function
Context/referent	Message	Referential Denotative Cognitive Language as a referent Representative informative
Addresser /sender	Message	Emotive Expressive
Addressee/ receiver	Message	Conative Appellative Directive imperative
Contact/Channel	Message	Phatic Relational contact
Code		Metalingual Metasemiotic
Message	Message	Poetic Aesthetic Rhetoric

Jakobson's model considers not only the communicator, communication, and recipient but also context, language, and metalanguage codes and contacts necessary for understanding communication. In other words, Jakobson's model provides a way to study information and semantic problems, including why the message received may be different from the message sent. It is no longer necessary to assume that the sender's and recipient's languages are the same; the broad term context makes us understand that human communication is not just a simple act of coding, communication, and interpreting.

Halliday's Metafunctions

Halliday derived the notion system of signs from Saussure (1922), information structure from Mathesius (1975), context of the situation from Malinowski (1923) and Firth (1957), threefold functions from Bühler (1934), options from Vachek (1976) and analyzed them then placed function as the central property of language. When Halliday began to develop the theory in the 1960s, the functional model was usually not an organizational model of the language itself but based on considerations outside the language (Halliday, 1985). He tried to explain the configuration of the elements of the natural language based on their functions.

> But in order to pursue our own investigation, we have to take a further step: a step that interprets functional variation not just a variation in the use of language, but rather as something that is built in, as the very foundation, so the organization of language itself, and particularly to the organization of the semantic system. In other words, function will be interpreted not just as the use of language but as a fundamental property of language itself, something that is basic to the evolution of the semantic system. This amounts to saying that the organization of every

> natural language is to be explained in terms of a functional theory (Halliday, 1985).

Halliday recognized the intrinsic language function of creating text, the textual function additionally. Halliday found that language is organized into three functions: ideational function, interpersonal function, and textual function. Because of their diversity of the functions of the elements of the language, he identified the term 'meta-function' as his "own model" to interpret functions of language (Halliday, 1975). The term meta-function distinguishes the comprehensive functions from the micro-functions such as Theme, Subject, and Actor of grammatical organization and the macro-functions such as instrumental, regulatory, and heuristic of early child language.

The structural function of clauses differs from the structural options of the transitivity system, structural options of the mood system, and structural options of the theme system. But none of these options sets itself fully specifies the structure of the clause; each determines a different set of structural functions. Therefore, the systems based on structural functions are divided into three groups: transitivity, mood, and theme. These tags relate specifically to the clause system in which they relate to these general elements of the language.

Halliday's meta-functions are not the labels of different uses of the language from the external views but the functional principles of the internal organization of lexicogrammar and semantics. All three functions are simultaneously organized in a clause (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

1. **Ideational function:** This function specifies that a language is used to represent our experience of our world. This function can be identified as two functions, namely experiential and logical. The experiential function is organized by the system of transitivity with a typical grammatical resource. This conveys the message about what matters get communicated, participants involved in the communication, and the circumstances where it was taking place.
2. **Interpersonal function:** According to this function, language is a resource for communicators, and it directs both speaker and listener to continue the communication process. The interpersonal function is organized by the system of mood and modality with typical lexico-grammatical resources available in a language. The function is to examine the types of relationships established through dialogue, the attitudes of the interacting partners towards one another and towards expression, the types they find interesting, how they take turns negotiating, etc.

3. **Textual function:** By this function, language can be demonstrated as a resource for creating and presenting text by facilitating to express the experiences and indicate participants' relationships in the communication process. The textual function is organized by the point of departure- theme and landing point – rheme is the basic textual resources in lexicogrammar. It involves looking at the different types of cohesion, the different patterns of emphasis and emphasis used to bond the different parts of the conversation together, etc.

   E.g., 7. Raja goes to university

Table 2: Metafunctional Interpretation of a Clause

Function	Structure/System	Raja	Go (es)	(to) University
Ideation Experiential	Transitivity	Actor	Process (material)	Circumstance (location)
Interpersonal	Mood	Subject	Finite	Residue
Textual	Theme	Theme unmarked	Rheme	

Meta-functional interpretation of a clause positions its simultaneous functions of meanings, structures, grammatical units, and organization. This illustration evokes both intrinsic and extrinsic functions of language.

CONCLUSION

Language is a system of communication-based upon linguistic elements and the combination of elements into clauses/sentences. To use a particular language, language functions should be incorporated. This means how we use language, how we communicate in a social situation, and how language works in a text or what we do with that language. The various functions of this language need to be explored. For that, we need models to interpret from a conceptual framework. Conceptual models are the backbone of empirical and theoretical studies.

To understand the fundamentals of the functions of language, conceptual models formed by the above three proponents tried to explain the basic functions of language from different perspectives. Malinowski's distinction between pragmatic function, magical function, and phatic speech communication was based on field studies, while Bühler's division of representation, expression, and conative functions was based on experimental analysis. Although Bühler developed the organon-model into an integrative model of the essential objects of psychological research: a subjective experience, social behavior, and structures of objective sense, his model and his conceptual theory offer a wealth of new perspectives for

functional oriented linguistics, and this theory strand a possible underground influence on the models of Jakobson and Halliday. The complication of Jacobson's Six Function Model is always limited by the assumption that perfect communication can be achieved by completely restoring context. Halliday's meta-functional model covers the range from small and single lexico-grammatical units to the whole text. This shows that the functional description is the underlying basis of the unified description of the language.

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Appendix 1. Comparison of explanations of Bühler, Jakobson and Halliday

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="6">Functions of Language</td><td>Bühler</td><td colspan="2">Jakobson</td><td>Halliday</td></tr>
<tr><td>Ausdruck (Speaker’s expressive function)</td><td>Addresser /sender’s</td><td>Emotive
Expressive</td><td rowspan="2">Interpersonal function</td></tr>
<tr><td>Appell (listeners’ reactions - appealing function)</td><td>Addressee/ receiver’s</td><td>Conative
Appellative
Directive
imperative</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Darstellung (representation function)</td><td>Context/referent</td><td>Referential
Denotative
Cognitive
Language as a referent
Representative
informative</td><td>Ideational function (Experiential & Logical functions)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Contact/Channel</td><td>Phatic
Relational
contact</td><td rowspan="3">Textual function</td></tr>
<tr><td>Code</td><td>Metalingual
Metasemiotic</td></tr>
<tr><td>Message</td><td>Poetic
Aesthetic
Rhetoric</td></tr>
</table>