LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS:
WHAT AND HOW
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I INTRODUCTION

Language can be approached from two different points of view. This dichotomy of viewing language deals with a linguistic answer on one end and a human science answer on the other end. To this language view, Bell (1981:119-22) states that language can be seen as either a **closed** system linguistically or as an **open** system human scientifically.

To be more specific, Bell (1981:19) claims that as a **closed** system, "language is internally consistent but insulated from the environment in which it occurs". Further he goes on claiming that as an **open** system language is "interacting with, changed by, and changing its environment" Bell (1981:22). The dichotomy of viewing language this way is briefly termed the *formal vs. functional orientation*.

Based on the second orientation, *functional* one - in fact it is the concern of sociolinguistics - language reflects "the socio-cultural organization of a community of speakers" (Finocchiaro, 1974:12). The language analysis is then emphasized on "the human-ness of human language and its place in human society as one of the most necessary and complex of all social skill" (Bell, 1981:22). In line with this view, language is similarly defined as "a set of culturally transmitted behaviour pattern shared by a group of individuals" (Greenberg, 1957 in Bell, 1981: 23).

Further discussion about language based on the *functional* orientation may fall on the search to seek the answer of 'what is meant by knowing a language?' Knowing a language implicitly means knowing how to use that language (Wardaugh, 1986:3). Simply, knowing a language equals knowing the varied functions of a language.

Sociolinguistically speaking, language therefore provides a numerous ways of conveying message. More specifically, Holmes (1992:3) puts it: "Language provides a variety of ways of saying the same thing - addressing and greeting others, describing things, paying compliments." Meanwhile, strengthening the fact that speakers can make use of language in a variety of ways and for many different purposes, (Wardaugh, 1986: 25) points out: "... language will exhibit

considerable internal variation, and single-style speakers will not be found (or if found, will appear to be extremely 'abnormal' in that respect, if in no other)."

The fact that there is no single-style speakers found in communication forces people to interpret one another's language. In Cook's (1989:24) words, people are interpreting other people's language and simultaneously expecting others to interpret their own apparently with a surprising degree of accuracy. The access to make the interpretation successful is trying to understand language functions.

Implicitly, language serves a range of functions. It is therefore the purpose of this paper to reveal the functions of language. Precisely, with the WHAT in the title of this paper the writer will center on the discussion of language functions. Hopefully this discussion will provide a better understanding of the srtucture of language and how languages function in communication. Eventually, this paper is devoted to reveal important implications of the knowledge of language functions. Put simply, with the HOW in the title of this paper the writer will center on the discussion of how to enable language functions to work properly.

II FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE

In this part, the writer is going to present sets of language functions proposed by eleven language experts. What comes next is the analysis of the eleven sets of language functions put forward by keeping time-sequence in mind. To end the discussion in this part, the writer is going to synthesize the language functions presented by those linguists.

Quoted by Bell (1981:120) and by Levinson (1983:41), Jacobson (1960) suggests six functions of language. The first set of language functions put forward by Jacobson proceeds by first identifying the elements for communication, i.e. addresser, adressee, context, message, contact and code. The six 'basic components of communicational event' (using Levinson's term) or the six 'more sophisticated view of language functions' (using Bell's term) of Jacobson's are as follows:

1) *Referential/cognitive* function w hich focuses on the referential context of the language.
2) *Emotive/expressive/affective* function which focuses on the speaker's or addresser's to express his emotion.
3) *Conative/directive* function which focuses on the speaker's wishes that the hearer do or think as expected.
4) *Metalinguistic* function which focuses on the code being used or the language used to talk about language.

5) *Phatic/interaction management* function which focuses on the channel or on the establisment and maintenance of contact.

6) *Poetic* function which focuses on the way in which message is encoded.

The following figure taken from Bell (1981:120) is presented to simplify Jacobson's set of language functions showing the function of language derived from the particular aspect of the communicative events:

Speech Functions

Aspect	function
Addresser	Emotive, expressive, affective
addressee	Directive, conative
context	Cognitive, referential
message	Poetic
contact	Interaction Management, phatic
code	Metalinguistic

J.L. Britton (1971) in Wilkinson (1975::54-55, 173-186) mentions three main functions of language. The second set of language functions put forward by Britton is as follows:

1) *Expressive*. This sort of language functions is used for getting to know one another, exchanging opinions, attitudes, and belief. Commenting on a shop while walking on a street with a friend is a typical example of this function. This *expressive* function, Britton strengthens, causes the *Transactional*. and *poetic* functions to appear.

2) *Transactional*. This sort of language functions covers the *informative* and *conative* function. Modifying Moffett's (1968) language functions, Britton (1971) in Wilkinson, 1975:181-185) elaborates informative function as follows:

- *Record*. Language is used for recording what is going on here and now, and/or for describing what is to be observed here and now.
- *Report*. Here language is used for reporting what went on or what was to be observed on a particular occassion at a particular place.
- *Generalized narrative or descriptive information*. Language is used for reporting what goes on (or used to go on) habitually.
- *Analogic, low level of generalization*. Language is used for classifying, for instance, industries of Scotland, the effects of the Thirty Years War.
- *Analogic*. Language is used for classifying logically, hierarchically or more rigorously than in the previous function.
- *Speculative* (*analogic/tautologic*). Language is used for framing general hypotheses on the basis of general propositions - and yet not reaching conclusions.
- *Tautologic* (Moffett's Theorizing). Language is used for systematically combining abstract propositions to reach conclusions or to form theory. The following piece of language provided by Britton in Wilkinson (1975:183) *The social life of man is*

> *characterized not by virtue of his being a tool-using animal but by virtue of his being a language-generating animal* has *tautologic* function.

The *conative* function of language is divided into two kinds: regulative and persuasive. In regulative function, language is used for requesting, affecting action. In persuasive function, language is used for getting the listener to follow the course of action recommended. Here the speaker brings logical argument to counter possible objections from the listener.

So by this transactional function, Britton seems to stress that language is used for "getting the world's wrok done" from buying "tahu isi' or negotiating a motorbike to that used for defending a proposal to impose, for instance, a fair way for the coming General Election.

3) *Poetic*. This *poetic* function reveals *to be*, but not *to say*. It is used to shape and organize something in and for itself.

MAK Halliday (19730 quoted by Wilkinson (1975: 54, 169-173) provides a general account of language functions revealing that language is a part of social behaviour and that it expresses one's attitude. The third set of language functions provided by Halliday consists of seven types as follows:

1) *Instrumental*. This *instrumental* function shows that language is used for manipulating and controlling the environment.

2) *Regulatory*. This *regulatory* function shows that language is used for one's being controlled by others.

3) *Interactional.* This *interactional* function shows that language is used for defining and consolidaing the group, imposing and showing status.

4) *Personal*. This *personal* function shows that language is used for expressing feeling and attitude, reinforcing, creating individuality.

5) *Heuristic*. This *heuristic* function shows that language is used for exploring environment, investigating reality, seeking facts, the explanation of facts and generalization.

6) *Imaginative*. This function shows that language is used for creating one's own environ-ment, not for learning about how things are but for making them as one feels inclined.

7) *Representational*. This r*epresentational* function shows that language is used for communicating about something, conveying a message which has specific reference to the processes, persons, objects, abstractions, qualities, states and relations of the real worlds.

Joan Tough (1975) as quoted by Wilkinson, 1975:: 55) refines the set of language functions of the the Halliday category. He divides language functions into two: *relational* and *ideational*. *Relational* function is used to 'maintain the self' and to to relate to other people in responding. By *ideational* function, Tough claims that language is used to direct one's own and other's representative actions, to organize and reflect predictive experience or to hypothesize, imagine, emphasize.

The fifth set of language functions is of Finocchiaro's (1974). Synthesizing language functions by some linguists, Finocchiaro (1974:5) puts forward the following set of language functions:

1) *Personal*: to express one's emotions, needs, thoughts, desires, attitudes, etc.
2) *Interpersonal*: to maintain good social realtions with individuals and groups - expressions of praise, sympathy, joy at another's success, inquiries about health, etc.
3) *Directive*: to control the behaviour of others through advice, warning, requests, persuasion, discussion, etc.
4) *Referential*: to talk about objects or events in the immediate setting or environment or in the culture.
5) *Metalinguistic*: to talk about language;e.g., What does ____ mean?
6) *Imaginative*: to use language creatively in rhyming, composing poetry, etc.

The sixth set of language functions is of Wilkinson's (1975). Wilkinson (1975:56-57) classifies language functions into three. The first function concerns with the self-expression. In Wilkinson's words, it belongs to *Who am I?* group. The second function concerns with the relationships with others, establishing and maintaining contacts, co-operating. In Wilkinson's words, it belongs to *Who are you?* group. The third function concerns with the exploration of the world that was, that is, that will be. Wilkinson names it *Who/what is he/she/it?* group. The following language functions of Wilkinson's is worth quoting to clarify the short analysis above (Wilkinson, 1975:56-57):

Who am I?   1 Establising and maintaining self
               2 Language for analysing self
               3 Language for expressing self (for celebrating or despairing, etc)

Who are you?   4 Establising and maintaining relationships
               5 Co-operating
               6 Empathizing, understanding the other
               7 Role playing, mimicry
               8 Guiding, directing the other

Who/what   9 Giving information

is he/she/it?   10 Recalling past events (past)
                            11 Describing present events (present)
                            12 Predicting future events - statement of intention
                                                    statement of hypothesis,
                                                    what might happen
                            13 Analysing, classifying
                            14 Explaining, giving reasons for
                            15 Exploring - asking questions, but in other ways also, by 'sounding out' people
                            16 Reflecting on own/other's thought and feelings

Searle (1976) quoted in Levinson (1983:240) points out five kinds of language functions. They are:

1) *Representative*: to commit speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition of which the typical examples are asserting and concluding.
2) *Directives*: to get the addresser to do something (requesting, questioning are its typical examples).
3) *Commissives*: to commit the speaker to some future course of action (promising, threatening, offering are its typical examples).
4) *Expressives*: to express a psychological state (thanking, apologizing, welcoming, congratulating are its typical examples).
5) *Declarations*: to effect immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs and to rely on elaborate extra-linguistic institutions (excommunicating, declaring war, firing from employment are its typical examples).

The eight set of language functions is taken from the one of Schumann's (1978). Schumann as quoted in Ellis (1986:253) distinguishes three broad functions of language. The first, the *communicative* function, involves the transmission of purely referential, denotative information. The second, the *integrative* function, involves the use of language to mark the speakers as a member of a particular social group. The third, the *expressive* function, consists of the use of language to display linguistic virtuosity in literary uses.

The ninth set of language functions is taken from the one of Bell's (1981). Bell (1981:119-120) maintains three kinds of language functions. Firstly and primarily, being *cognitive*, language is used for conveying information, focusing on the context in which the message is transmitted, referring to objects and concepts. Secondly, being *indexical* (using Abercrombie's term) language is used for telling about the speaker (his age, sex, social class, level of education, his attitude to the topic and to other participants). Thirdly, being interactive (having *interaction management*), language is used for conveying participation in the process of communication.

The tenth set of language functions is taken from the one of Cook's (1989). Cook (1989:25-26), considering the seven elements of communication (addresser, addressee, channel, message

form, topic, code and setting) puts forward seven sorts of language functions. They are as follows:

> *The emotive function*: communicating the inner states and emotions of the addresser ('Oh no!, 'Fantastic', 'Ugh!, and swear words used as exclamations.
> *The directive function*: seeking to affect the behaviour of the addressee ('Please help me!', 'Shut up!', 'I'm warning you!).
> *The phatic function:* opening the channel or checking that it is working, either for social reasons ('Hello', 'Lovely weather', 'Do you come here often?') or for practical ones ('Can you hear me?', 'Are you still there?', 'Can you see the blackboard from the back of the room?', 'Can you read my writing?').
> *The poetic function*: in which the particular form chosen is the essence of the message. (The advertising slogan BEANZ MEINZ HEINZ would lose its point if it were paraphared as 'If you are buying beans, you will naturally buy Heinz.')
> *The referential function*: carrying information.
> *The metalinguistic function*: focussing attention upon the code itself, to clarify it or to renegotiate it ('What does this word mean?', 'This bone is known as "femur" ', ' "Will" and "shall" mean the same thing nowadays'). This book has largely metalinguistic function.
> *The contextual function*: creating a particular kind of communication ('Right, let's start the lecture', 'It's just a game').

The set of language functions of Cook's above is called "classification of macro-functions" (Cook, 1989:27). Cook goes on to say that those macro funstions of language can be divided into their micro functions. Further classification of directive function, for instance, might look like the following (Cook, 1989:27):

	questions	
	orders	requests for action
directive function	requests	requests for information
	pleas	requests for help
	prayers	requests for sympathy

The eleventh set of language functions is taken from the one of Holmes's (1992). Holmes (1992:286) claims that there are a number of ways to classify spech functions, but he suggests the following set of language functions useful in sociolinguistic research:

1) **Expressive** utterances express the speaker's feelings, e.g. I'm feeling great today.
2) **Directive** utterances attempt to get someone to do something, e.g. Clear the table.
3) **Referential** utterances provide information, e.g. At the third stroke it will be three o'clock precisely.
4) **Metalinguistic** utterances comment on language itiself, e.g. 'Hegemony' is not a common word.
5) **Poetic** utterances focus on aesthetic features of language, e.g. poem, an ear catching motto, a rhyme: Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.
6) **Phatic** utterances express solidarity and empathy with others, e.g. Hi, how are you, lovely day isn't it!

After presenting the analysis of language functions put forwads by those eleven linguists and/or sociolinguists, the writer is now trying to present the synthesis of those language

functions. Careful reading of the explanation given in each function discussed above leads the writer to the conclusive statements presented below.

Jakobson's *referential/cognitive* is the same as Britton's *informative-transactional*, Halliday's *representational*, Finocchiaro's *referential*, Wilkinson's *who/what is?,* Searle's *representatives*, Schumann's *communicative*, Cook's *referential,* Bell's *cognitive*, and Holmes's *referential*. Jakobson's *emotive, expressive, affective* is the same as Britton's *expressive*, Halliday's *personal*, Tough's *relational*, Finocchiaro's *personal*, Wilkinson's *who am I?*, Searle's *expressives and declarations*, Schumann's *integrative*, Cook's *emotive,* Bell's *indexical*, and Holmes's *expressive/affective*. Jakobson's *conative/directive* is the same as Britton's *conative transactional*, Halliday's *instrumental*, Tough's *ideational*, Finocchiaro's *directive*, Wilkinson's *who are you*, Searle's *directive*, Schumann's *integrative*, Cook's *directive*, Bell's *indexical*, and Holmes's *directive*. Jakobson's is *metalinguistic* the same as Halliday's *heuristic*, Finocchiaro's *metalinguistic*, Cook's *metalinguistic*, and Holmes's *metalinguistic*. Jakobson's *phatic interaction* is the same as Britton's *expressive*, Halliday's *interactional*, Finocchiaro's *interpersonal* , Wilkinson's *who are you?*, Cook's *phatic* and *contextual function*, Bell's *interaction management*, and Holmes's *phatic* . Jakobson's *poetic* is the same as Britton's *poetic*, Halliday's *imaginative* , Tough's *ideational*, Finocchiaro's *imaginative*, Wilkinson's *who am I?* , Schumann's *expressive*, Cook's *poetic*, and Holmes's *poetic*. Halliday's *regulatory* is the same as Tough's *ideational*, and Searle's *commisisive*.

The following table is presented as the summary of the writer's synthesis of language functionss discussed in the previous paragraph:

Language Function Proponent	Kinds of Language Function						
Jakobson (1960)	*referential cognitive*	*emotive/ expressive/ affective*	*conative/ directive*	*meta-linguistic*	*phatic interaction*	*poetic*	-
Britton (1971)	*informative*	*expressive*	*conative*	-	*expressive*	*poetic*	-
Halliday (1973)	*represen-tational*	*personal*	*instrumental*	*heuristic*	*interac-tional*	*imaginative*	*regulatory*
Tough (1974)	-	*relational*	*ideational*	-	-	*ideational*	*ideational*
Fino-cchiaro (1974)	*referential*	*personal*	*directive*	*meta-linguistic*	*inter-personal*	*imaginative*	-

Language Function Proponent	Kinds of Language Function						
Jakobson (1960)	*referential cognitive*	*emotive/ expressive/ affective*	*conative/ directive*	*meta-linguistic*	*phatic interaction*	*poetic*	-
Wilkinson (1975)	*who/what is he/she/it?*	*who am I?*	*who are you?*	-	*Who am I?*	*who am I?*	-
Searle (1976)	*represent-atives*	*expressives and declaration*	*directive*	-	-	-	*commisisve*
Schumann (1978)	*commu-nicative*	*integra tive*	*integrative*	-	-	*expressive*	-
Cook (1989)	*referential*	*emotive*	*directive*	*meta-linguistic*	*phatic* and *contextual*	*poetic*	-
Bell (1981)	*cognitive*	*indexical*	*indexical*	-	*interaction management*	-	-
Holmes (1992)	*referential*	*expressive/ affective*	*directive*	*meta-linguistic*	*phatic*	*poetic*	-

The table above closes the discussion of language functions. Now the writer is going to center on the second main point of this paper - the How.

III HOW TO ENABLE LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS TO WORK PROPERLY

Some rules are indeed needed to enable different functions of language to work properly. Using Bell's term, there should be 'philosophical input' (Bell, 1981:121) of which the example is presented below.

When an S (speaker) says *Your wallet, or I'll shoot* (labeled A - a speech act) to an H (hearer), the language functions appearing is of Directive (macro function) and of a threatening (micro function). Making this threat work properly requires the following rules of 'threatening' social meaning (Bell, 1981:122):

> S believes that A will be detrimental to H.
> S believes that he can caary out A.
> H believes that S can caary out A.
> H believes that S will caary out A.
> It is not obvious to S and H that A will happen in the norml course of events

In that typical example of threat *Your wallet, or I'll shoot,* S should believe that the threat will be harmful to H - the shooting will at least hurt H (Imagine how unsuccessful it is if *I'll squeeze your thumb* is used instead of *I'll shoot*, unless S believe squeezing the thumb of H will hurt H because of the blister on the thumb).

S should also believe that he can carry out the action. It is a hollow threat if S cannot perform the threat. He should have the ability to shoot.

Meanwhile H should believe that S can and will carry out the action. It is also a hollow threat if H knows that S cannot or will not perform the threat (Imagine how unsuccessful it is if H knows that S is armless and/or S is not holding a gun).

Finally, the threat will not work if it happens in a normal course of events. *Your wallet, or I'll shoot* is not a threat at all if it happens in a normal conversation between two close friends. Bell's (1981:122) example is worth presenting to make rule number 5 clearer: "Finally, I cannot threaten to do what I would do normally anyway. I can, for example, hardly 'threaten' to be home by 5.30 this evening, since that is the normal time for me to arrive home."

Besides philosophical requirement above, intention to make students achieve communicative competence should be kept in mind by teachers. In his words, Bell (1981:134) writes:

> ... the kinds of knowledge and skill which the native user of a language must possess in order to communicate effectively. If this is the case, it is also a model of the knowledge and processes which we intend our learners to control as a result of our teaching, i.e. it is a partial specification of the *communicative competence* which we intend them to achieve.

For the sake of *communicative competence* achievement, Bell's concept of 'situational constrants' should be emphasized. The fact that "the skilled communicatior takes the situational constraints into account as he speaks or writes, listens or reads, revising his assessment of the constrains and the weightings he assigns to each as he receives feedback from the other participants" (Bell, 1981:124) shows that sociolinguistic requirement is decisive to make language functions work properly. Taking the SPEAKING suggestion of Hymes (1972), Bell (1981:125-126) proposes the sociolinguistic requirement as follows:

> S *setting* - time and place - and *scene* - the cultural definition of the interaction.
>
> P *participants* - the sender(s) and receiver(s) of the message(s).
>
> E *ends* - the *outcomes* - the results, intended or otherwise, of the communication - and the *goals* - aims, general and individual of the communication.
>
> A *acts* - the form and sequence of the message; how the message is communicated.
>
> K *key* - the manner in which the message is delivered.
>
> I *instrumentalities* - the channels - written, spoken, etc. - used for the transmission of the message.
>
> N *norms* - expectations concerning the conduct of the interaction which govern the behaviour of the speaker(s) and the hearer(s) and their interpretation of the messages.
>
> G *genre* - type of interaction readily identifiable by the language used.

The piece of language *Honey, I need a new hair drier* will not work properly without considering the S - the time setting. Imagine what will happen if a husband, coming home tired, is greeted by wife with a *Honey, I need a new hair drier.* This is just one example of how important the *who, when, where* and *why* consideration to make a piece of language work properly.

III CONCLUSION

In this paper the writer has examined language functions. She has also put forward two important implication*s* of the knowledge of language functions. The following paragraphs summarizing the discussion above are expected to close the paper.

Obviously, one way of reaching successful communication is to look at 'the other side of the mountain'. Cook (1989:24) more specifically says: "One way of doing this [interpreting a piece of language] is to look behind the literal, formal meaning of what is said or written, and to consider what the sender of a message intends to achieve with it, to try to understand its function." This paper has made an attempt to search language functions. Hopefully, this search will result in one's wise interpreting of a piece of language for the sake of successful communication.

However understanding the functions of language is not sufficient since there are two important implications behind it. (Allow the writer to say there is still another side of the mountain to search). The philosophical as well as sociolinguistic requirements are quite decisive to make language functions work properly.

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