**Lecture Four: Language Functions**

Language is basically used for communication. According to Roman Jacobson (the Russian-American linguist), six elements are necessary for the description of an effective act of verbal communication: ***the context, the addresser, the addressee, the contact, the code,*** and ***the message***. Each of these elements is connected with one of the six functions of language as introduced by Jacobson and illustrated in the following figure:

**Context**

**(Referential)**

**Addressee**

**(Conative)**

**Message**

**(Poetic)**

**Addresser**

**(Emotive)**

**Contact**

**(Phatic)**

**Code**

**(Metalingual)**

1. ***The Referential/ʻdenotativeʼ, ʻcognitiveʼ Function (context):*** the context is the target factor of this function. According to Hébert (2011), “The referential function is associated with an element whose truth value (true or false status) is being affirmed (or questioned), particularly when this truth value is identical in the real universe and in the assumptive or reference universe that is taking it on”. To exemplify, we consider statements like "the sun rises in the East", "the Earth is round", etc.
2. ***The Emotive/ʻExpressiveʼ Function (addresser):*** this function focuses on the addresser and is obvious when expressing emotions using such interjections like: Oh!, Bah!, Yuck!, etc.
3. ***The Conative Function (addressee):*** this function is concerned with urging the listener to act. It suggests a “vocative and imperative, which syntactically, morphologically, and often even phonemically deviate from other nominal and verbal categories” (Jacobson, 1960, p.355).
4. ***The Phatic Function (contact):*** this function is concerned with establishing the connection and contact between the speakers, as in ʻHello?ʼ.
5. ***The Metalingual Function (code):*** Itis used when speaking about the language. According to Jacobson (1960), “whenever the addresser and/or the addressee need to check up whether they use the same code, speech is focused on the CODE: it performs a METALINGUAL (i.e., glossing) function. ʻI don’t follow you-what do you mean?ʼ” (p.356).
6. ***The Poetic Function (poetic):*** It emphasizes the beauty of language, and puts “the focus on the message for its own sake” (Jacobson, 1960, p.356).

***Reference***

Jakobson, R. (1960). Concluding statement: Linguistics and poetics*.* InT. Sebeok (Ed.), *Style in Language*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Hébert, L. (2011). The functions of language. In L. Hébert (dir.), Signo [online], Rimouski (Quebec), <http://www.signosemio.com/jakobson/functions-of-language.asp>.