



American Expression E2796 Roman Jakobson's model

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Roman Jakobson's model of communication explains how language functions through six factors involved in verbal communication. Jakobson developed the model from linguistic theory and presented it in his essay "Linguistics and Poetics" in 1960. Instead of treating communication as the transfer of information, he showed that elements of a communicative situation support different functions of language.

The first factor is the addresser, the person who produces or sends the message. The second is the addressee, the person for whom the message is intended. The third is the context, meaning the situation, subject, or reality to which the message refers. The fourth is the contact, the connection that allows communication to occur. The fifth is the code, the shared system of signs and rules used by participants, such as a language. Finally, the message is the verbal form communicated from addresser to addressee.

Jakobson associates each factor with a function of language. The emotive function focuses on the addresser and expresses feelings, attitudes, or reactions. For example, an exclamation such as "What a beautiful day!" can reveal the speaker's emotional response. The conative function focuses on the addressee and attempts to influence or direct the listener. Commands, requests, and questions often illustrate this function, as in "Please close the door."

The referential function is oriented toward the context. It emphasizes information about objects, events, situations, or facts and is commonly associated with descriptive statements. For instance, "The meeting begins at nine" provides information about an event. The phatic function focuses on contact and helps establish, maintain, or end communication. Greetings such as "Hello," casual conversation, and expressions like "Can you hear me?" can perform this role.

The metalingual function focuses on the code itself. Speakers use it when they explain, clarify, or check the meaning of words and expressions. For example, when someone asks, "What does this term mean?" the language is being used to discuss language. This function is important in teaching, dictionaries, linguistic analysis, and situations where communicators may not share exactly the same understanding of a code.

The poetic function focuses attention on the message itself, particularly its form, arrangement, sound, rhythm, repetition, or stylistic pattern. Poetry makes this function visible, but Jakobson argues that it can appear in ordinary language, advertising, slogans, jokes, and forms of communication. The poetic function does not mean that a message must be a poem; rather, it means that the construction of the message becomes significant. A slogan using rhyme or repetition, for example, draws attention to its wording as well as its meaning.

In conclusion, Jakobson's model presents communication as an interaction among addresser, addressee, context, contact, code, and message, with six corresponding functions: emotive, conative, referential, phatic, metalingual, and poetic. A single message can contain several functions simultaneously, although one may be dominant. The model remains valuable because it encourages readers to examine not only what language communicates, but also who communicates, to whom, through which code, under what circumstances, and with what attention to the form of the message.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. What are the six factors in Roman Jakobson's model of communication, and how are they connected?
2. How does Jakobson's model explain the different functions of language?
3. What is the difference between the referential, emotive, and conative functions?
4. How do the phatic and metalingual functions operate in everyday communication?
5. Why is the poetic function important in understanding literary and non-literary messages?