

Function of language

Fundamental function of language is communication, which involves three main elements

- 1) a speaker
- 2) a listener
- 3) a signaling system

In order that communication runs well, the signaling system used should be shared by both the speaker and the listener.

Aspects of language function

- Speech acts: speaker's intention to affect the listener (to inform, warn, ask to do something, etc)
- Propositional content: a certain information that a speaker wants to convey
- The structure of the information a speaker wants to convey --- given – new information

Performative utterances

- When a speaker is uttering something, s/he is attempting to accomplish something. This intention is what so called the speech act or illocutionary effect.
- In every utterance there is always a performative verb, a verb that indicates the speech act that a speaker intends to perform.

Direct and indirect speech acts

- Direct speech acts are those expressed by the constructions specifically designed for the acts.
- Indirect speech acts are those using other construction (construction that does not explicitly show the illocutionary effect the speaker wants to happen to the listener)
- In the indirect speech act, there could be no direction at all between the surface structure and the underlying representation of the utterance.

Propositional content

- **Propositional content** is the content or meaning of the proposition expressed with a sentence.
- It is also called the ideational content of a sentence.
- It is the combination of propositions expressed through a sentence

The functions of proposition

- Denoting states or events
- Denoting facts about states or events
- Qualifying parts of the proposition

Source of complexity

The tendency of a speaker to use a more complex sentence is natural and not a coincidence. It is mainly driven by the intention of the speaker to facilitate understanding.

The complexity of a sentence in general serves to help listeners to pick out the specific participant.

Thematic structure

In order that an information is easily understood by a listener, it needs to be structured following a certain thematic structure. Among those structures are:

- Given – new information
- Subject – predicate
- Frame – insert
- Theme - rheme