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