

WORD COMBINATION AS A DIFFERENTIAL FEATURE OF THE FUNCTION OF SPEECH

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Functions of speech as essential categories in sociolinguistics and linguistic stylistics have been consistently described theoretically¹. Disregarding minor works², which deal with the question of functions of speech cursorily, it is reasonable to assume that human verbal communication manifests six functions of speech, viz. the emotive function, the referential function, the conative function, the phatic function, the metalingual function and the poetic function. Though R. Jakobson's terminology has been fully adopted here, this assumption may be generally valid because the six functions correspond qualitatively with seven functions (the personal function, the heuristic, the instrumental and the regulatory function, the interactional function, the imaginative function and the representational function) distinguished by M. A. K. Halliday whose starting theoretical presuppositions are different from those of R. Jakobson but his system of functions of language is as consistent and as accomplished.

Though the validity of the categorial value of these functions of speech has not so far been argued within the framework of theoretical speculations except a major polemic by J. A. Martinez Garcia³ concerning the inadequacy of the poetic function within R. Jakobson's system, no interpretation of the relevance of these functions of speech to extensive linguistic material has ever been given and therefore the actual linguistic properties of the functions of speech have never been appreciated.

It is an established fact that every speech act comprises all the functions of speech in a varying degree of active force and it is impossible to select a single text as a form of speech which registered a manifestation of one single function. It is possible, however, to identify texts marked by the dominating manifestation of one function, first and foremost by the dominating manifestation of the poetic, the referential and the phatic function.

The linguistic potential of the poetic function exceeding the linguistic potential of all the other functions, investigation of the linguistic expression of the poetic function is not likely to reveal anything but the exceptional peculiarities of linguistic usage. Thus, generally valuable research becomes predictable when it concerns the linguistic manifestation of the referential and the phatic functions. Moreover, investigation of the linguistic properties of the two functions is promising because the referential and the phatic functions make up a contrasting opposition concerning

¹ Jakobson R. *Linguistics and Poetics*. — In: *Style in Language*/ Ed. by Th. Sebeok. Cambridge—Mass., 1966; Halliday M. A. K. *Explorations in the Functions of Language*. London, 1973.

² Herzler J. O. *A Sociology of Language*. N. Y., 1965; Boulton M. *The Anatomy of Language*. London, 1968 and others.

³ Martinez Garcia J.-A. *Propiedades del Lenguaje Poetico*. Universidad de Oviedo, 1975, esp. pp. 132–146.

purport criterion in speech: the referential function is characterized by pragmatically purposeful, referent motivated purport, whereas the phatic function is characterized by pragmatically purposeless, referent motiveless purport.

The object of research has been limited to the expression of qualifying relations by means of nominal and verbal attributes⁴, i. e. to the attributive word combination (for example, *similar description, fine weather, lovely face, previously unknown, skillfully prepared*, etc.), because it is only the attributive syntactic bond that is characterized by the highest meaning potential in as concise a syntactical structure.

Irrespective of the form of speech and the type of discourse it is possible to consider the peculiarities of the word combination as differentiating a function of speech only in such texts which are marked by the overwhelming domination of one function, either the referential or the phatic. Thus essays, textbooks, theses, lectures and research papers were taken for texts marked essentially by the manifestation of the referential function and small talk, acknowledgements, forewords, introductions as well as conclusive remarks were taken for texts marked essentially by the manifestation of the phatic function.

Both the referential and the phatic functions may and often have identical contextual reference as, for example: nature, social life, people, food, entertainment, occupation, etc. etc.⁵, and it is not the subject matter or lexical nomination that make the two functions distinct. It is essentially a quality of the word combination, i. e. the composition and motivation of the word combination that signify the difference of function.

Thus a referential context limited to health problems reveals the use of attributive word combinations which include common vocabulary as well as special terminology as, for example: *a lung (eye, industrial) disease, pressure headache, violent headache, pulmonary tuberculosis, apical pneumonia*, etc., whereas phatic use in an identical context is limited to qualifying words and word combinations which include only common, contextually non-restricted vocabulary as, for example: *a nasty disease, terribly ill (sick), feel awful, quite well, much better, just the same, not so bad* and the most favoured *fine* in predicative qualification.

An analogous picture of the distribution of qualifying vocabulary is revealed in a referential context limited to weather, both in referential and phatic use accordingly:

*cold weather,
milder and wetter weather,
wind South to South-West,
wind fresh and strong,
wind West, moderate,
strong wind,
strong gale,
scattered showers,
dense fog,
sunny periods, etc. etc.*

*fine weather,
nasty weather,
terrible weather,
fabulous wind,
nice drizzle, etc. etc.*

⁴ For the concept of verbal attributes see: The Theory of Syntax in Modern Linguistics by O. Akhmanova and G. Mikael'an. The Hague—Paris, Mouton, 1968, pp. 126—132.

⁵ On the contents of phatic speech in particular see: Драздаускаене М.-Л. А. Контактосталавливачащая функция речи. Канд. дис. М., 1970; Drazdauskiene L. Content and Sociolinguistic Aspects of Phatic Speech. — Kalbotyra, 1975, XXVI(3), p. 19—25.

Grouped according to the function, the vocabulary of attributive word combinations reveals correspondingly contrastive features, viz. objective qualification in attributive word combinations pertaining to the referential function and subjective qualification in attributive word combinations pertaining to the phatic function. It is important to point out here that it is only a frequent recurrence of one or the other type of attributive word combinations that signify either the referential or the phatic function. One or a few attributive word combinations of objective or subjective qualification do not identify a function or signal its change as, for example, in:

We have areas of poverty and demoralization in our country that could be well on the way to solution in a year if we had the decency to face our responsibilities. Millions of dollars are spent persuading us to buy automobiles with five times the necessary horsepower and to buy cigarettes, which cause cancer.

*We know how to produce food with fantastic efficiency but are holding production down at a time when there are more hungry people in the world than ever before in history (Dr. Benjamin Spock. *Baby and Child Care*. N. Y., 1971, p. 16).*

The referential function remains dominant in this text and the singled out word combination signifies popular and not strictly technical linguistic usage. Indeed, the change of function may not at all be signified by any lexical means which is very often the case at the end of oral speech acts when the speaker continues rephrasing and paraphrasing and using identical qualification to that in strict referential use (for example, *linguistic material, scientific research, factual data*, etc. etc.), but the change of the stimulated tone for the indifferent, the disappearance of interest in the eyes and gestures signify that communication had ceased to be referential and continues for the sake of personal and social appropriateness in the situation rather than for the situation. Moreover, instances like that lead to theoretical contemplations concerning the mechanism of speech perception which is evidently not limited to the auditory reaction to verbal use and the central nervous system alone.

Alluding to the problem set at the beginning (see p. 31), a straightforward generalization appears relevant and that is that attributive word combinations do identify both the referential and the phatic functions of speech or, in other words, both the referential and the phatic functions in their dominating manifestation comprise differential attributive word combinations. A linguistic feature of the referential function of speech is the attributive word combination of overt or covert motivation which expresses objective qualification. The degree of transparency of the motivation of the attributive word combinations which are characteristic of the referential function varies from the zero linguistic motivation to full linguistic motivation.

Technical linguistic usage in the referential function is characterized by extralinguistically motivated attributive word combinations which express objective qualification. For example: *pressure headache, pulmonary tuberculosis, cerebral haemorrhage, industrial diseases; descriptive authors, traditional poets, erotic poem, dramatic poem, Elizabethan drama, rhythmical prose; hot electrons, plasma phenomena, oil seal, washing gun, lubricating oil, conduit entry, medium pressure, coil voltage, bimetal relay, cover closely, tighten slightly, rotate clockwise (anti-clockwise), turn counter clockwise*, etc. etc.

Owing to extralinguistic motivation or rather to linguistic labelling of actual physical relations as caution in information process, the technical language in the referential function is characterized by positionally related constituents of the attributive word combination which often comprises two nouns in mechanic contact.

Routine linguistic usage in the referential function is characterized by the extralinguistically motivated attributive word combination, by the linguistically motivated word combination and by the attributive word combination of covert motivation, all of which express objective qualification.

Extralinguistically motivated attributive word combinations characteristic of routine referential usage include: *new theories, further problem, main function, former feeling, previous generation, childless couple, similar capacity, different qualities, hungry people; greatly diminish, gain promptly, constantly meet, etc.* etc. Judging by compositional qualities, this type of attributive word combination is very much like the extralinguistically motivated attributive word combination in technical routine usage (see above pp. 33–34) as the two constituents of the word combination come to be used together because there exist analogous actual physical relations.

Linguistically motivated attributive word combinations characteristic of routine referential usage include: *strong light, heavy rain, permanent job, constant friend, brief answer, short man, long path, tall lady, clear view, evident fault; write legibly, pronounce distinctly, work diligently, read attentively, etc.* etc. Whatever the immediate extralinguistic relations, the above word combinations are motivated by the presence of correspondent semes in the semantic structure of the constituents of the word combination. This type of the attributive word combination is not as numerous as it is intricate.

Covertly motivated attributive word combinations characteristic of routine referential usage include idiomatic (*best man, first night, first floor; fall flat, go slow, etc.*) and non-idiomatic (*new baby, big job, straight answer, difficult task, strong instinct; speak fluently, fall heavily, etc.* etc.) phraseology. Idiomatic phraseology is characterized by rationally unaccountable motivation as the compositional qualities of the idiomatic word combination vaguely suggest fused social and historical motives and convention rather than reasonable linguistic distribution. Non-idiomatic phraseology is characterized by rationally unaccountable motivation in most cases as it suggests culturally conditioned linguistic instinct of the speaker the causes and efficiency of which are not overtly registered.

Both technical and routine linguistic usage in the referential function comprise rare samples of clichéd attributive word combinations of subjective qualification (for example: *fantastic efficiency, imposing buildings, remarkable thing, classic example, great satisfaction, enormous amount; strongly influence, etc.* etc.) which are not typical of the referential function.

Linguistic usage in the phatic function does not divide into technical and routine usage and there is only one type of word combination characteristic of the phatic function and that is the attributive word combination of overt, personally and contextually indirected motivation. It is the attributive word combination which expresses subjective qualification. For example: *terrible headache, fine weather, lovely afternoon, amusing author, ghastly book, fine feature, lovely dress, miraculous coat, wonderful idea, terrible mess, awful bore, gorgeous colours, grateful acknowledgements,*

awfully nice, totally unfilmable, absolutely lost, deeply indebted, especially indebted; admirably serve, particularly grateful, etc. etc.

Overt, personally directed motivation of the attributive word combination of subjective qualification in the phatic function exposes the essence of this function and that is that contextual reference is irrelevant to it.

Investigation of the peculiarities of the attributive word combination pertaining to functions of speech confirmed the fact that the attributive word combination is a differential feature of the function of speech.

This investigation has also challenged the adequacy of the metalingual function of speech in R. Jakobson's system. Judging by linguistic features in general and the peculiarities of the attributive word combination in particular, the metalingual function comes to be identified with the referential function. Hence the question of the theoretical validity and pragmatical adequacy of the system of the six functions of speech which leads to continuous research.

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ŽODŽIŲ JUNGINYS KAIP SKIRIAMASIS KALBOS FUNKCIJOS BRUOŽAS

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Reziūmė

Straipsnyje keliamas klausimas apie kalbos funkcijų kaip bendriausių sociolingvistikos ir lingvistikos stilistikos kategorijų konkrečią lingvistinę išraišką ir skiriamuosius bruožus. Konkrečia medžiaga ir nuosekliais argumentais pagrindžiamas teiginys, kad atributyvinis žodžių junginys yra komunikatyvinės ir fatinės kalbos funkcijų skiriamasis bruožas. Komunikatyvinei kalbos funkcijai būdingas įvairiai motyvuotas atributyvinis žodžių junginys, išreiškiantis objektyvią kvalifikaciją, o fatinei kalbos funkcijai – atributyvinis žodžių junginys, išreiškiantis subjektyvią kvalifikaciją.