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Исследовательская работа (эссе)

“Роман Якобсон и его роль в развитии лингвистики: новаторство и влияние на современное языкознание”



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Individual essay contest

**“Unity in diversity”**

Research work (essay)

“Roman Jakobson and his role in the development of linguistics: innovation and influence on modern linguistics”



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# **Thesis plan**

## **Introduction**

### **Main body**

#### **Fundamental works and innovative ideas**

- Metaphor and metonymy
- Functional Stylistics
- Theory of communication

#### **Jacobson's life and work through theory of communication**

## **Conclusion**

## **References**

## **Supplements**

***Languages differ essentially  
in what they must convey  
and not in what they may convey.  
(R. Jakobson, 1987, p.410)***

If you are a professional linguist or simply have an interest in this field, you have likely heard of the brilliant scientist Roman Jakobson. A true master of his craft, he achieved significant results and made enormous contributions to the development of linguistics. His innovative theories and ideas form the foundation of many sophisticated contemporary branches of language studies, including computational linguistics, cognitive linguistics, applied linguistics, stylistics, computer language models. These areas are all connected by a core principle: the fundamental concept that languages differ primarily in the information they must convey rather than the potential information they can express.

I should mention that within this essay it would be quite problematic to study the whole number of Jakobson's works due to their big variety, though all of them are exceptional. That is exactly why I have selected some of them and will try to show their unique value and the impact on the humanitarian science in general and the modern branches of linguistics in particular.

**Metaphor and Metonymy.** Jakobson introduced the profound concepts of metaphor and metonymy as fundamental organizing principles of discourse in “*Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances*” (R. Jakobson, 1956). In the essay, we can look at how Jakobson's ideas about metaphor and metonymy help us understand the way language creates meaning. By studying how metaphors and metonyms are used in communication, linguists of today can clearly see how people use these tools to express complicated thoughts and stir emotions.

**Metonymy:** “*Hollywood*” used to refer to the film industry, “*Silicon Valley*” to refer to the tech industry.

**Metaphor:** Virginia Woolf calling the human mind “**the most capricious of insects**” (9, *retrieved March 18, 2024*).

Without doubt Roman Jakobson's concepts of metaphor and metonymy have made significant contributions to the development of modern cognitive linguistics, computational linguistics, and AI language models. Let us consider how these concepts impact each of the given areas of modern linguistics.

Cognitive linguistics benefits from Jakobson's framework by exploring how these rhetorical devices shape thought, perception, and communication, giving the opportunity for understanding language acquisition, language processing, and representation (3, *retrieved March 21, 2024*). Jakobson's ideas about metaphor and metonymy have been applied to the study of how children learn and use language. Research has shown that children's use of metaphor and metonymy changes as they develop, suggesting that these rhetorical devices play a role in language acquisition (8, *retrieved March 18, 2024*).

**Examples of metaphor and metonymy in children’s language:**

- “**wheels**” to mean “**car**”, “**brain**” to mean “**intelligent person**”.
- “**web**” for the **World-Wide Web** and “**root**” to mean “**source**” to extend the meanings of these terms (9, *retrieved March 21, 2024*).

Additionally, Jakobson's work has influenced the development of computational models of language processing. In particular AI language models draw on Jakobson's concepts of metaphor and metonymy to improve natural language processing tasks, such as text generation, sentiment analysis, and language understanding. By incorporating metaphorical and metonymic patterns into AI models, researchers enhance the ability of machines to generate contextually appropriate text, advancing the field of computational linguistics (10, *retrieved March 14, 2024*). Moreover, the study of metaphor and metonymy in AI language models contributes to the development of algorithms that can better capture the tiniest implications of human language, leading to more sophisticated language generation.

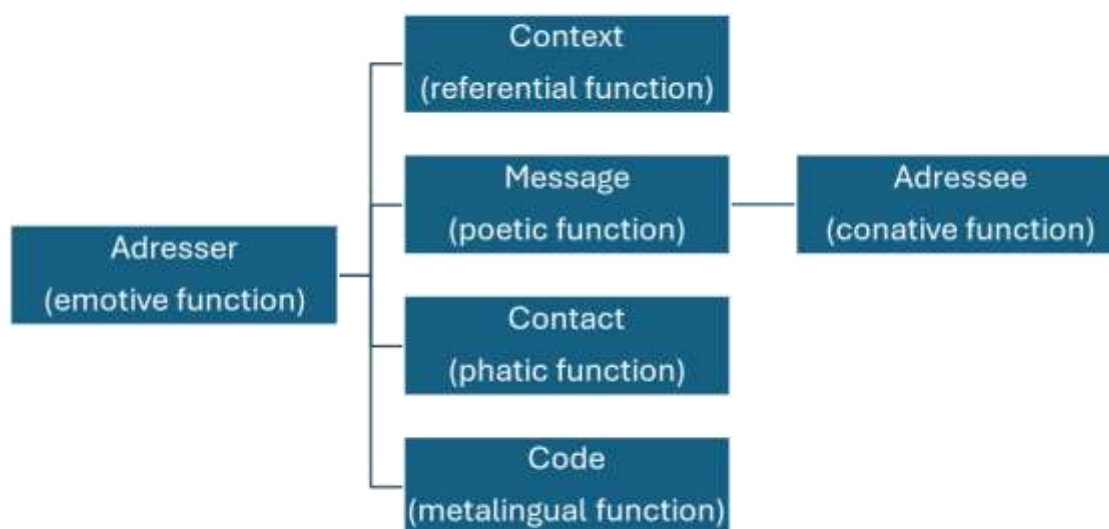
**Metaphor:** AI models can generate metaphors by understanding the source and target domains, such as comparing “time is money” or “love is a journey”.

**Metonymy:** AI language models can also use metonymy to refer to a concept by using a related entity, such as referring to “the pen” to mean “the written word” or “the sword” to mean “army” (10, retrieved March 14, 2024).

**Functional stylistics.** One more substantial contribution of R. Jakobson to the development of formalism is his concept of “functional stylistics”, the main idea of which is that language and style are used for specific purposes and functions in different situations and contexts (Lungu, Golubițci, Bobescu, 2007, pp. 71-82).

We should not forget that R. Jacobson was not only an excellent linguist, but also a semiotician. Therefore, the last work of the scientist, to which I would like to pay special attention, is the **theory of communication**.

R. Jakobson establishes that there are six elements in the communication process. In addition, there are six functions of language that are needed for communication to occur. Each function interacts with a factor of the communication process.



**Image 1. Jakobson's communication scheme (R. Jakobson, 1975, p.353).**

If we consider those six functions of language, suggested by Jakobson, we should realise that they inform us about the purpose of the addresser who is using the language.

We considered that it would be a fascinating experiment to apply Jakobson's own scheme to his life and work. Here is the outcome of this application.

<b>ADDRESSER (sender)</b> Roman Jakobson, the renowned Russian and American linguist.
<b>ADDRESSEE (receiver)</b> This is the audience that reads his works and receives the message including young and distinguished scholars, students, colleagues, writers, critics, and humanitarian scientists)
<b>CONTEXT</b> This refers to the historical and intellectual setting in which he lived and worked from 1915 to 1982, covering such locations as Moscow, Prague, The Hague, Brno, Amsterdam, Rome, Copenhagen, the USA, Kazimierz, Zagreb, Dubrovnik, Paris, Brazil, Portugal, Warsaw, Zurich, Madrid, Tel Aviv, New York. It includes the linguistic theories he promoted (formalism, structuralism), the cultural and political influences shaping his thoughts, and the academic circles he operated with (Moscow Linguistic Circle, the Society for the Study of Poetic Language (OPOJAZ), Prague Linguistic Circle, the Linguistic Circle of New York, various universities, and conferences).
<b>CONTACT (channel)</b> This involves the diverse mediums Jakobson used and created to convey his ideas, such as academic publications, lectures, conferences, collaborations with fellow scholars, poems, essays, and other forms of communication.
<b>CODE</b> This encompasses the system of rules and conventions Jakobson employed in his linguistic analyses and theories. It includes language structures, theoretical

frameworks, and methodologies he developed for studying language and communication, phonetics, semantics, poetics, Slavic studies, language acquisition, pathology, and mythology. It also covers phonological distinctive features, constants and tendencies, variants and invariants, bipolar structure, binary oppositions, and, of course, unity in variety.

### **MESSAGE**

This is represented by the insights, theories, and contributions Jakobson made to the field of linguistics, notably his pioneering concepts of metaphor, metonymy, the functions of language, theory of information, and language and communication.

### **Table 1. Jakobson's life and work through the Scheme of Communication.**

By analyzing Jakobson's life and work through his own communication scheme, we gain a deeper understanding of how he engaged with his audience, the context in which his ideas were formulated, the channels through which he shared his knowledge, the linguistic code he employed, and the messages he conveyed through his outstanding research work. Jakobson was a revolutionary innovator, *“inventor and fighter, friend of modern artists and truly one of their ranks” (Effenberger, 1983, p.13)*. Jakobson was such a diverse and versatile personality that he even published futurist poetry under the penname Aljagrov. Thus, as a futurist he “foregrounded” the “tomorrow” of the language science.

Roman Jakobson sought future, and he defined it. His scientific discoveries and insights have had a profound impact on various fields of linguistics, including computational linguistics, applied linguistics, and neurolinguistics. He created the metalinguistic world we are now evolving and restructuring, using Jakobson’s laws, codes, and postulates.



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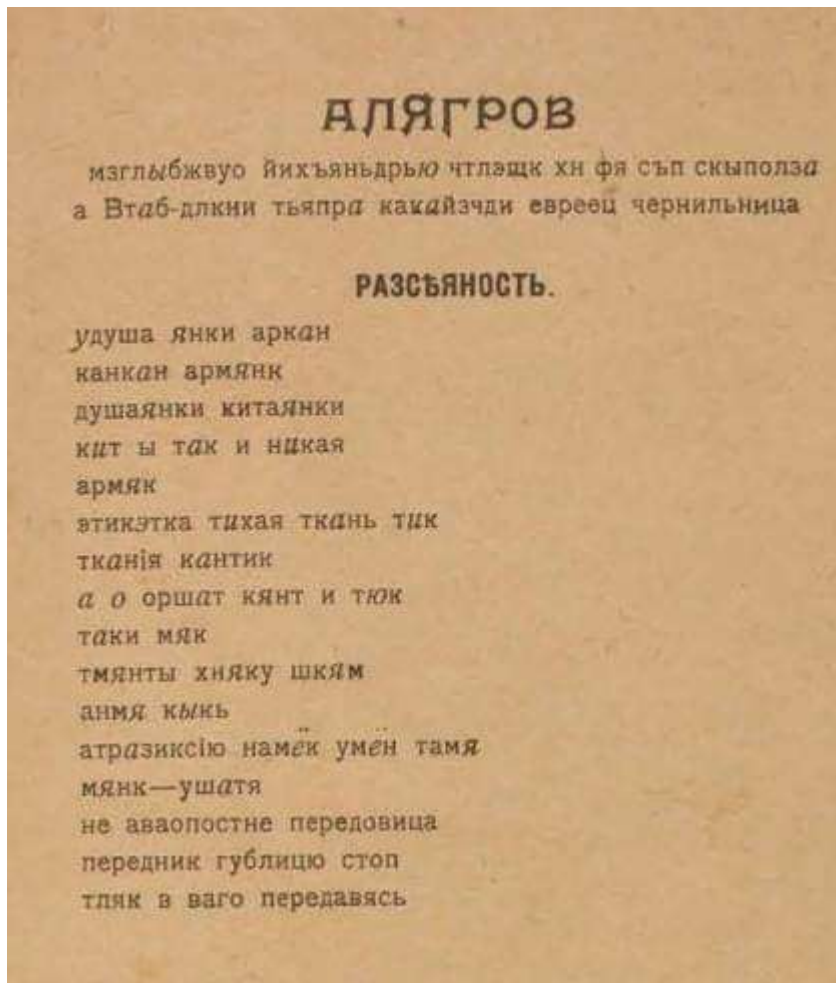
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## Supplement 1



**Image 1. Generated using Kandinsky by Sber AI.**  
<https://www.sberbank.com/promo/kandinsky/>. Prompt: Renowned linguist Roman Jakobson studies a modern language model based on AI and built on the principles of structuralism.

## Supplement 2.



**Image 2. Futurist poem by R. Jakobson in the collection by Alexei Eliseevich Kruchenykh, Olga Vladimirovna Rozanova Zaumnaya Gniga.** Alyagrov is the pseudonym of R. Jakobson. <https://traumlibrary.ru/fx/kruchenih-zaumnaya-gniga.html>. “Science of poetic form has to go hand in hand with poetry ... In Russia, new literature often goes side by side with the young science of literature (the OPOJAZ group)” (Jakobson 1996, 562).

### Supplement 3.

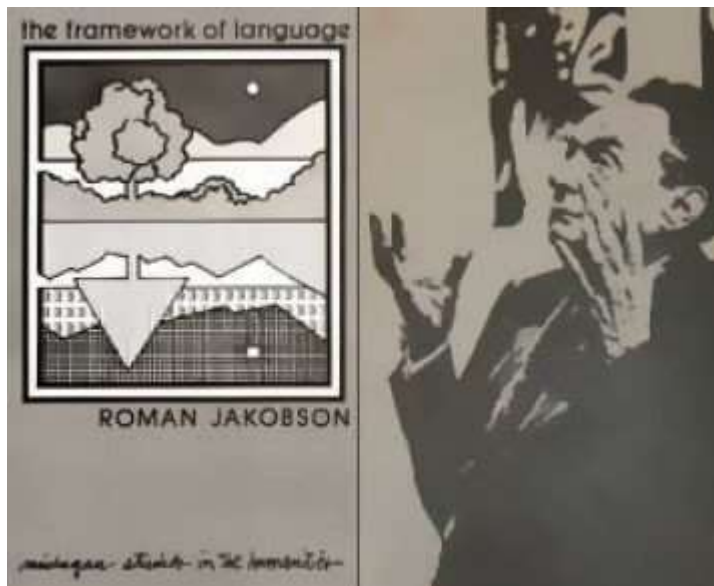
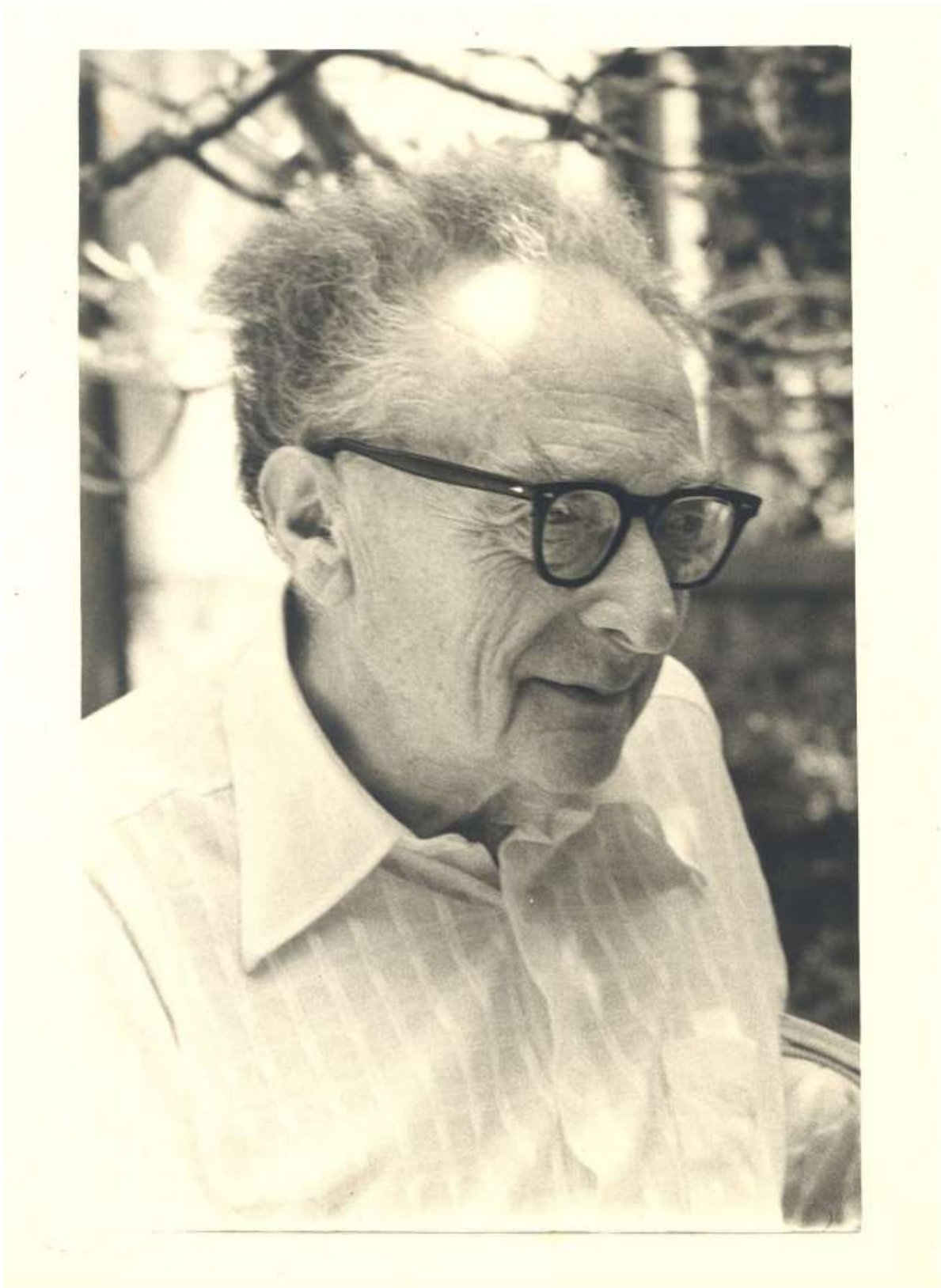


Image 3. Roman Jakobson. The Framework of Language.

<https://lsa.umich.edu/slavic/about-us/special-projects/roman-jakobson.html>.

**Supplement 4.**



**Roman Jakobson, 1978.** <https://books.openedition.org/ledizioni/4465>