

**Зареченский технологический институт – филиал федерального
государственного бюджетного образовательного учреждения высшего
образования**

«Пензенский государственный технологический университет»

Индивидуальный конкурс эссе

“Единство в различии”

Исследовательская работа (эссе)

**«Роман Якобсон и его роль в развитии лингвистики:
новаторство и влияние на современное языкознание»**



Выполнил: Кислов Максим Денисович

Студент 2 курса

Руководитель: Ершова Наиля Фоатьевна

2024

Individual essay contest

**“Unity in Diversity: Russia and the English-Speaking World.
Time for Equal Opportunities”**

Research work (essay)

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



Written by: Kislov Maksim

Supervisor: Ershova Nailya

Theses

- 1. Roman Jakobson was the prominent Russian-American philologist. He investigated different aspects of language functioning. The results of his innovative researches greatly influenced humanitarian sciences of the 20th century.*
- 2. Warm family relationships, good education, and intellectual abilities provided the basis for linguist`s future achievements.*
- 3. Roman Jakobson dealt with the problems of structural linguistics. He developed a theory of language communication and a method of binary oppositions. Jakobson together with N.Trubetskoi created phonology. The scientist`s work on aphasia gave a start to neurolinguistics.*
- 4. Roman Jakobson is considered to be the founder of structural linguistics. The essence of structuralism is that any literary text is a structure where each unit has meaning only being related with or opposed to other units.*
- 5. Jakobson developed theory of communication with six elements and six corresponding functions. Modern sociolinguistics, communication theory and communication sociology were greatly influenced by the theory.*
- 6. The philologist revolutionized linguistics by applying structural analysis to language, and structuralism was one of the most significant movements in the humanities and social sciences of the century.*

"... No scholar of modern times has done more to revitalize the study what has come to be called 'the human sciences' - and particularly the science of language - than Roman Jakobson..."

Frank (1984)

"Professor Jakobson opposes linguists who refuse to study meaning. He compares them to biologists who cut off the head of a chicken to see what movements remain. Useful experiment, he allowed. "But it is dangerous if biologists say it is better and more comfortable for a chicken to walk without a head. Linguistics without meaning is meaningless."

Israel Shenker Special to The New York Times (Oct.11, 1971)

Introduction

What is language? There are a lot of definitions of this notion. In simple terms, language is a means of communication. Indeed, it is a wonderful thing enabling us to socialize with each other, share our thoughts and feelings.

Following the innovative principles of structuralism, which the object of my essay, the outstanding linguist of the 20th century, Roman Jakobson developed I can single out some structure consisting of historical and social events (the first element), people making these events happen (the second element), and the language being the reflection of the civilization progress (or regress). To sum up, language is an indication of the development of people`s thinking. Being absolutely abstract, it is on the very top of human abilities. Hence, it is only a highly intelligent person, possessing a complex mechanism of understanding the world, is able to solve complicated linguistic problems. That was a kind of man Roman Jakobson was, the prominent Russian-American philologist. Though, he spent most of his life abroad, he considered himself Russian. Jakobson had a strong Russian accent. Jerzy Kurylowicz, the Polish linguist, joked, "Jakobson is a peculiar man; he speaks Russian fluently in six languages."

This essay deals with Roman Jakobson`s contribution to modern linguistics.

Who is Roman Jakobson?

Roman Jakobson was a linguist who studied the structure of language and was particularly interested in the difficulties that appear in many languages. He was born on 10 October 1896 in Moscow. He was lucky enough to have a profound education and a loving family. Roman got pragmatic mind from his father, a chemical engineer, and desire for beauty inherited from his mother, one of the most gifted pupils of Tchaikovsky. These two features had merged in scientist`s nature forever.

When he studied at Moscow University, he became the head of the Moscow Linguistic Circle. After graduating from the university, he moved to Prague where he founded The Prague Linguistic Circle. Three years later, Jakobson emigrated to Denmark and Norway as he was suspected of espionage. Later the philologist went to the USA where he lectured at Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute. Professor Jakobson wrote 500 books and studies in six languages (they have been translated into 18). Roman Jakobson died in 1982 in Boston. "Ruskii filolog" is written on his gravestone.

What innovations is Jakobson famous for?

Roman Jakobson was a distinguished thinker who did not limit himself by an existing theory but proposed a new fundamental one - structural linguistics - where language is a structured system of interrelated formal units. He developed a theory of language communication which greatly influenced philosophy, anthropology, psychology.

Besides, Jakobson together with N.Trubetskoi created phonology. Moreover, he developed a method of binary oppositions to define significant phoneme` characteristics. Jakobson said, "The notion of binary opposition is fundamental in life as well as in language. Take 'cheap' and expensive. You cannot think about something cheap without having at the same time in you, patently or latently, the idea of expensive."

The scientist's work on aphasia (a language disorder resulting in the inability to produce, repeat, and/or understand language) gave a start to a new science - neurolinguistics. Jakobson also was interested in literary criticism, poetics, language acquisition, Slavic studies, pathology, and mythology.

As it can be seen from the very short overview given above, the scientific heritage left by Jakobson is enormous. There is hardly a field in linguistics which had not been investigated by him. It is obvious that it is impossible for a student with technical training to speak on all Jakobson's innovations. That is why, further, this assignment will examine the most important contribution to the modern linguistics, namely, the basics of structuralism and Jakobson's theory of communication.

What is structural linguistics?

Among the key scientific innovations of Jakobson, structural linguistics comes first. The philologist is considered to be the founder of this field of knowledge. This passage will deal with this question.

Having examined some works on this issue, some conclusions were drawn as to the emergence of structuralism in humanitarian knowledge in the 20th century was connected with desire to transform philology into exact science. According to Jakobson, the main idea of structural approach is that any literary text is a structure where each unit (a word, a sound, an image, etc.) has meaning only being related with or opposed to other units. Hence, the relationship among the components get such vital power that even absence of a component (though this component is supposed to be) is important (for example, there is no rhyme in the rhymed poetry). As a consequence, it is unreasonable to differentiate content from its form as well as the builders would break the walls in order to find the house's construction plan.

What is Jakobson's theory of communication?

Being a very versatile person, the philologist studied literary texts. Investigations in this field resulted in founding a theory of communication.

Using the linguistic model of communication, Jakobson distinguished six major elements of any act of communication:

- addresser (a person who sends a message),
- addressee (a person who gets the message),
- context (the reason for the message),
- contact (linking between the addresser and the addressee),
- the code (it includes the rules forming the message),
- message (an experience, idea, explanation, and so on).

Every element refers to one of the six functions of communication. The essay will delve into discussing these functions in a simplest, most brief, and most comprehensive manner. They are:

- 1) Expressive function is connected with the addresser; his/her attitude to the message is expressed. This is usually used in the first person. For example: I could hardly stand his silly jokes.
- 2) Referential function is the most basic one; the language is used to provide information. For example: Jakobson founded structural linguistics.
- 3) Metalingual function is connected with the code which helps to recognize meaning of the word or the subject. The aim of this function is to establish identity of a statement. The code must be common both for the addressee and the addresser. For example: “We couldn’t resist a touch of Schadenfreude (a sense of happiness from the failure of others) when he was defeated so heavily in the election.”
- 4) Phatic function is used to support a conversation or to check the connection between the sender and receiver. For example: “How are you getting on?” “See you later.”
- 5) Poetic function is referred more to the art form of the message but not to its content. The examples of the poetic function are the rhymes, the literary works, the sayings, the songs, the poems, the dramatic texts, etc. For example: “Tonight the moon shines high as if it were a diamond.”

6) Conative function. As R. Bell put it, “where language is being used to influence others, we have a conative function.” Therefore, this function means that the addresser wants the addressee to respond to the message or to pay attention to it. For example: “Would you mind doing it?”

Thus, these functions indicate the aim of the addresser who is using the language. One of the functions plays a major role in a text and usually defines the type of text.

Variations of Jakobson`s model are used in linguistics both to analyze language functions as a whole, and to analyze its discrete units, speech and text production. Modern sociolinguistics, communication theory and communication sociology borrowed the model for describing communication processes.

Conclusion

To sum up, I would like to come up with some conclusions:

First, I have never dealt with such science as linguistics before. It is my first trying to delve into such topic. And I should say it was a very valuable experience.

Second, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of Jakobson`s contribution to the modern linguistics. The philologist revolutionized linguistics by applying structural analysis to language, and structuralism was one of the most significant movements in the humanities and social sciences of the century. According to some experts, Jakobson's most important contribution was his development of the model of the communication theory of language based on language functions.

Attachment 1.



Pic.1 Roman Jakobson



Pic.2 Jakobson`s books

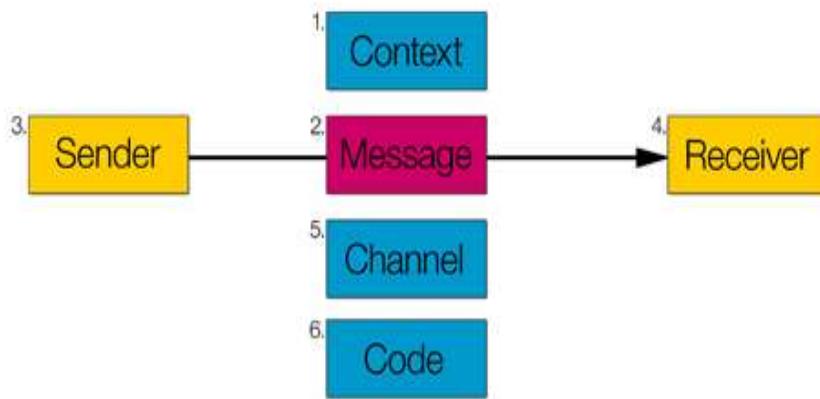
Roman Jakobson (1896-1982)

Six functions of language

- Referential function
- Expressive function
- Conative function
- Poetic function
- Phatic function
- Metalingual function

A small black and white portrait of Roman Jakobson, wearing glasses and a dark suit, looking slightly to the right.

Pic.3Jakobson`s functions of language



Pic.4 Jakobson`s communication model



Pic.5 The Prague Linguistic Circle

Bibliography:

- 1) Очерки по Якобсону. – URL:
https://shchedrovitskiy.com/philosophy/Jakobson_R.O.pdf?ysclid=ltad8r9zz8114201011
- 2) Let's go meta: Grammatical knowledge and self-referential sentences [ChatGPT] by Bill Benzon. – URL:
<https://www.lesswrong.com/posts/z2FQv2ejzBWRESLjk/let-s-go-meta-grammatical-knowledge-and-self-referential>
- 3) Roman Jakobson – Wikipedia. – URL:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Jakobson
- 4) Roman Jakobson - New World Encyclopedia. – URL:
https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Roman_Jakobson
- 5) Roman Jakobson's Contribution to Structuralism and Semiotics – Literary Theory and Criticism. – URL: <https://literariness.org/2016/12/05/roman-jakobsons-contribution-to-structuralism-and-semiotics/>
- 6) Functions of Language by Roman Jakobson – ELCOMBLUS. – URL:
<https://www.elcomblus.com/functions-of-language-by-roman-jakobson/>
- 7) Roman Jakobson: Facts, Book, Theory & Models | Study Smarter. – URL:
<https://www.studysmarter.co.uk/explanations/english-literature/literary-criticism-and-theory/roman-jakobson/>
- 8) Jakobson: Great in Any Language - The New York Times. – URL:
<https://www.nytimes.com/1971/10/11/archives/jakobson-great-in-any-language-prof-roman-jakobson-great-in-any.html>
- 9) Роман Якобсон: соединивший эпохи - Год Литературы. – URL:
<https://godliterature.ru/articles/2021/10/10/roman-iakobson-soedinivshij-epohi?ysclid=ltad7ozrfe10756895>

- 10) Р.О. Якобсон – 125 лет со дня рождения | Институт филологии и языковой коммуникации. – URL: <https://ifiyak.sfu-kras.ru/news/ro-yakobson-125-let-so-dnya-rozhdeniya/>
- 11) Якобсон Роман Осипович (1896-1982) - ФИЛОСОФИЯ РОССИИ. – URL: <https://shchedrovitskiy.com/jakobson-roman-osipovich/>