ON THE FUNCTIONALITY OF LANGUAGE

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0. INTRODUCTION

Functionalism in the language sciences basically claims that language is instrumental, i.e. that it fulfills certain functions for its user. But there is much confusion and little agreement about what the functionality of language involves. Yet, this is a matter of the uttermost importance for theory formation in the functionalist framework, since one's conception of language function will (or should) crucially determine the way one goes about in analyzing language structure and developing a grammar or, more generally, a model of human language processing and behavior. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to contribute to the clarification of how to understand the functions of language. I will first explicate the basic structure of the concept of function as such (1.). This provides the elements for making more precise the problem we are dealing with with respect to language (2.). Then I will discuss some of the most prominent proposals for function typologies in the literature (3.). On that basis, and through an analysis of the basic factors in communicative interaction, I will suggest a 'functional scheme' for human natural language (4.). Finally, I will discuss the relationship between communicative and other usages of language (5.).

1. ON FUNCTIONS

Since a discussion of the functionality of language necessarily evolves around the concept of 'function' as such, a proper understanding of this notion seems indispensable. In fact, as will appear below, some of the main discrepancies between views on language functionality in the literature are due to different usages of the notion. Therefore, in order to have a stable frame of reference, let's first briefly try to specify the structure of function specifications in scientific analyses of phenomena in general, before turning to a discussion of how statements on language functions relate to this.

It is sometimes claimed that "the word 'function' is highly ambiguous, and an exhaustive list of its many meanings would be very long" (Nagel 1961: 522). Yet, this might be a case of not seeing the wood for the trees. The fact that the term is used in several sciences to refer to quite different phenomena does not imply that it is ambiguous. It is
an inherent property of lexical items that they have flexibility in usage. The real issue is whether there exists a regularity in what is referred to by the term. In fact, if we abstract away from the usage of the term in mathematics and physics\(^2\), it seems possible to grasp the main usages of the term in biology and the human sciences in terms of scheme (1).

\[
(1) \quad [E_1 \rightarrow A_1] \rightarrow [E_2 \rightarrow A_2]
\]

(E stands for an 'entity' (a unit or system), A for an 'activity' or 'property', and the arrows specify the direction of the dependency-relationship between the entities and activities involved - the specific meaning of these symbols will become clear below.)

On the one hand, the term function can be used to state the existence of a relationship between two clusters of an entity and its activity or property as represented by the middle arrow in scheme (1). This usage takes the form of a statement that the function of \(A_1\) and/or \(E_1\) is to enable \(E_2\) to do \(A_2\), or to preserve \(A_2\) in \(E_2\) (or something similar). Hence, this involves formulating a goal or role of \(A_1\) and/or \(E_1\). Some examples\(^3\):

(2) The function of seeing is to detect enemies
(3) Respiration is a vital function of/for humans

Let's call this notion of function 'role function'.\(^4\)

On the other hand, the term function can also be used to refer to an activity or property inherent to some unit or system within a wider system, i.e. to the arrow as it occurs in a simple scheme of the type \([E \rightarrow A]\) in scheme (1). This usage is illustrated in (4) and (5).

(4) The function of the eyes is seeing
(5) The heart has the function to pump blood

Let's call this (with Greenberg 1958) 'organic function'.

Though the structure of role functions and organic functions is different at first sight, they show a clear relationship. By stating organic functions one clearly implies that \(A\) is the 'task' of \(E\) within the system it is part of. That is, one suggests that \(A\) has a specific role to fulfil within the larger system, and thus that the cluster specified should be taken to be part of a more encompassing scheme of the type of (1). This is what Nagel (1979) calls the 'goal-supporting view' of functions.\(^5\) The relationship becomes obvious if one compares (2) and (4) above: what is expressed in (4) (an organic function) clearly grounds
what is expressed in (2) (a role function).

The role of an entity/activity specified in a functional statement is obviously always supposed to be a positive one within a larger context. Thus, one would never say that 'the function of an axe is to split the heads of humans'. For an axe is simply not intended for that activity. One might say that 'this axe has had the function to split a man’s skull', but only if the axe has been used with that intention. It always implies that the axe has had a positive contribution from the perspective of the one who used it, to allow him/her to split a man’s skull.

Of course, role and organic functions can have various characteristics, depending on the features of the phenomena under consideration. For example, within the category of role functions one can distinguish between a formulation of relations between complexes of type \[E \rightarrow A\] which are located at different hierarchical levels (a relation between an entity/activity and the global system it belongs to), and which are located at the same hierarchical level (a relation between entities/activities within one global system - Greenberg (1958) calls this 'internal function'). Both in role functions and organic functions, one can distinguish between intentional and non-intentional functions, involving a conscious choice or action by a 'controlling' being or not. And, of course, it is often possible to specify several functions of one and the same entity or activity. Obviously, such modalities do not change the basic pattern expressed by a functional statement. They do play a role in the further analysis of the phenomena under consideration, though, and therefore it is important in specifying functional patterns to be clear about the exact composition and properties of the relations one is formulating. Of course, this is not always easy, as discussions of the functionality of language have shown.

2. WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE FUNCTIONALITY OF LANGUAGE?

The notion 'function' in the language sciences first of all occurs with respect to entities related to the linguistic system, to specify properties they have or things they do by means of which they play a role for the functioning of other entities. Thus, 'function' is used to refer to the pragmatic (information structural), semantic or syntactic status of constituents in an utterance which makes them fulfill some role for each other and/or contribute to the functionality of the utterance as a whole (as in 'the function of constituent X is subject'; cf. the notions syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic function in Dik 1978). More generally, the term is used to indicate the role of some sub-structure within a larger utterance unit. Thus, one can speak of the meaning distinguishing function of phonemes in minimal pairs, the function of words in constituents, 'function words', the function of utterances and para-
graphs within a text, etc. This nearly always involves the specification of an 'organic function' of structural units, implying that through this function they contribute to the functioning of linguistic structures at higher levels, and, ultimately, of the linguistic system in general. They specify elements of the functional network organizing language and allowing it to perform its role in an even wider context. The notion also occurs specifying the role of (hypothetical) components or sub-structures of the cognitive system determining linguistic behavior, within this system as a whole. Thus, one can speak of the function (the role) of the lexicon in a grammar, of world knowledge in language understanding, etc. Again, this involves aspects of the internal organization of language (albeit along a different dimension), suggesting that they are part of a functional network causing language as a whole to fulfill its role in a wider context.

These 'functions' internal to the linguistic system are of no further concern in the present paper, however. What interests us here is the usage of the notion 'function' to refer to this ultimate question concerning language as a unit, viz. the activities and roles it performs for the organism using it as a behavioral system. This is the matter of the functionality of language as such. The problem involved has to be seen within the general goal-directed nature of human behavior. A human is to a large degree a purposeful and even intentionally acting being. The things (s)he does normally make sense in the light of his/her own perspective on the contexts in which (s)he figures. This is not to say that (s)he cannot behave in senseless ways (in pathological cases, by mistake, or deliberately). But it only makes sense to talk about 'senseless behavior' against the background of the observation that normal behavior is meaningful, i.e. has a positive role for, or is directed toward the 'well-being' of the actor. This does not mean that every aspect of human performance is meaningful or goal-directed either. The snoring of a sleeping person, e.g., is no more a goal-directed act, or does no more contribute to the performance of a goal directed act, than the flapping of laundry in the wind or the whistling of a water-kettle on the stove. Neither is the smacking sound produced while chewing a goal-directed act (intentional smacking aside) or a positive contribution to the goal-directed process of food consumption. Nearly every purposeful act of the body produces 'noise', side-effects, and one has to carefully distinguish between things 'a human being does' and things 'proceeding from his/her body'.

In fact, the same distinction has to be made in domains other than the behavioral. Consider biology. A heart makes a beating sound, and pumps blood. Yet, only the latter is meaningful from a functional perspective. The former does not fulfil a role in the body, it is only a side-effect of the latter. (Cf. Cummins 1975). Of course, the heart beat does say something about the way the heart performs its task. That is why a physician uses the
heart beat as a diagnostic means to check whether and how the heart of a patient fulfills its role as a blood pump. Similarly, snoring can tell us something about the functioning of the respiratory organs, and smacking about how food consumption is performed. Thus, side-effects have to be part of the functional analysis of a system under consideration, although they must be assigned a separate theoretical status.

As to linguistic behavior in particular, as a phenomenon in general this is obviously not just some side-effect or incidental happening, as is snoring or smacking. A person is performing actions when (s)he is using language, and its goal is to contribute to the performance of these actions (which can themselves be directed at further goals). In the light of our analysis in 1., then, we are facing the question how functional scheme (1) should be specified for language as an 'entity'. More specifically, there are two sub-questions, viz. (i) what are the actions a user performs by means of linguistic behavior (i.e. what are its role functions); and (ii) what are the activities or properties of language which allow its user to perform these actions (i.e. what are its organic functions)?

(6) \[ E_{\text{language}} \rightarrow ? \rightarrow E_{\text{user}} \rightarrow ? \]

Maybe language also causes side-effects (in the sense mentioned above). Though this matter has to be kept apart from the functions, since it may be important for a functional analysis of language, we will nevertheless have to pay attention to it.

3. ON THE LITERATURE ON THE FUNCTIONALITY OF LANGUAGE

If one takes a look at the literature dealing with the functions of language, one is struck by the disparity and unclarity of the views presented. Proposals are sometimes wildly diverging, but motivation and/or argumentation is often lacking, and systematic comparison with alternatives is hardly ever found. This is quite an embarrassment, given the potentially crucial role of these matters for functionalist approaches to language. Let's scrutinize some of the more prominent suggestions and see where they lead us at. (See also Nuyts 1988.)

The cause for the differences seems to lie not only in mere contradiction between analyses of identical phenomena, but also in the fact that not all proposals concern the same phenomena. The analyses can be about different aspects of (6) (without there being an awareness of this: something like (6) is never made explicit in the literature), or even about phenomena which only indirectly relate to (6). In this respect, one can roughly distinguish three (albeit internally far from coherent) sets of proposals. Two of them main-
ly concern (at different levels of abstraction) the notion of communication, which is clearly relevant for the role function aspect of (6) (3.1), and the third one mainly concerns the organic function aspect of (6) (3.2).

3.1. COMMUNICATION AND SUB-ASPECTS OF IT

No doubt the most frequent view is that the function of language is communication. As Sapir (1931: 105) already stated, "Language is the communicative process par excellence in every known society", and this view is hardly ever contested (in most of the more complex proposals to be discussed below the functions are also situated within the 'language for communication' view.) Of course, this statement remains somewhat vague, since the notion of communication is ambiguous. There are at least two usages in the literature, viz. (i) a general one, referring to the process of interaction between individuals, and (ii) a specific one, referring to the process of interaction between individuals by means of natural language. This ambiguity is interesting in so far that it indicates how the 'communicative function' view relates to (6). One gets one specific type of communication if individuals use language for it; language is one among a series of instruments for communication. Thus communication is a more global activity of the language user, and language fulfills a role for performing it. This is an answer to the second question mark in (6).

(7) \[E_{language} \rightarrow ? \] \[\rightarrow \] \[E_{user} \rightarrow A_{communication}\]

Though hardly anybody will dispute that communication is a function of language (at this level of analysis), there is a clear tendency among non-functionalists to dispute the claim that communication is the function of language. They usually refer to all kinds of non-interactive linguistic behavior (among them Chomsky 1975), and/or (more rarely) claim that language is primarily an instrument of thought (e.g. Harman 1975). If so, this would mean that the second part of scheme (7) is not complete. This point of view seems inaccurate, but the discussion hinges upon a more precise analysis of communication, and therefore I will postpone it till later (see 5.).

A second set of proposals (including Ogden and Richards 1949, Jakobson 1960, Hymes 1962, Robinson 1972, Copi 1978, Dik and Kooij 1979, Dik 1986 - also speech act classifications like Austin 1962 and Searle 1976 belong here\(^8\)) mainly concerns phenomena which are to be situated at a level of abstraction different from the one represented in (7). Most of the functions discussed in these proposals concern sub-aspects or instances of the
phenomenon of communication, in that they refer to (types of) communicative acts a
language user can perform by means of specific (sets of) linguistic utterances. For example,
with utterance (8)

(8) I feel profoundly unhappy

one can perform the communicative act of expressing an emotion. Hence, one can say that
the function of this utterance (and a function of language in general) is to allow the
expression of emotion. This function is present in each of the above mentioned proposals
of this category. Or utterance (9)

(9) Close the damned door!

can be used to perform the communicative act of making an appeal to the hearer to
perform a further act. Hence, this is another function of language, mentioned e.g. in the
proposals by Jakobson, Hymes, Searle, Copi, and Dik. These functions specify the role of
specific (sets of) utterances for the language user, and in terms of a scheme of type (1)
they could be conceived as in (10).

(10) \[E_{\text{user}} \rightarrow ? \rightarrow [E_{\text{user}} \rightarrow A_{\text{communicative act}}]\]

Let's call these functions, with Dik and Kooij (1979), 'sub-functions of communication'.

A general problem with overviews of this type is whether they have overall validity.
It is questionable whether it is possible to make an exhaustive list of sub-functions of
communication (contrary to what is often claimed in e.g. speech act theory) since language
allows the performance of an endless variety of communicative acts. It is possible to
distinguish main categories of sub-functions, which can be further subdivided in principle
until one reaches the level of the individual act. In fact, all sub-functions mentioned in the
proposals under consideration are wider categories. But then the problem is that there can
be considerable variability in categorizing sub-functions (as is apparent from the proposals;
and see Searle 1976), depending on the criteria used and the level of abstraction chosen
within the phenomenon of communication.

A major difficulty with the proposals is that they hardly ever make explicit which
criteria have been used and which level of abstraction has been chosen (Searle is the only
exception). Still, though this is by no means always the case (see below), some proposals
do show a systematicity in the classification, and such cases clearly demonstrate how there
can be an orientation to quite different dimensions of communication. (In this way proposals sometimes implicitly relate to particular organic functions of language.) For instance, the function specified with respect to (8) above states some referential object of a speech act (which relates it to the fact that language in communication refers to, or provides information about states of affairs in reality, which is an organic function - cf. 4.2). Thus, a classification can be oriented toward types of referential objects of communicative acts.) The function specified with respect to (9), however, indicates a type of intentionality of a speech act (thus, it relates to the fact that in communication the speaker pursues intentions with language, which is another organic function - 4.2). Hence, a classification can also be oriented toward types of intentions involved in communicative acts. No doubt many more criteria for classification can be found, and communicative acts can be classified according to each of these.

It is also questionable whether such classifications have cross-cultural validity (again contrary to what is sometimes suggested). No doubt, there are differences in what can be done with language depending on the cultural background of the speakers. Thus, while the universality of the fact that language is used for communication is beyond doubt, this does not imply that it is possible to give a universal specification of which specific communicative acts can be performed with language (Hymes 1969).

Speech act classifications like Austin's and Searle's, and also the proposals by Dik and Kooij (1979) (with exception of the 'aesthetic function' - cf. below) and Dik (1986), are examples of pure surveys of sub-functions of communication which are also explicitly intended as such. Dik and Kooij's (1979: 29ff) typology juxtaposes sub-functions related to different dimensions (they also admit that there are various possibilities to classify communicative acts), but speech act classifications, and also Dik's (1986) classification, which is closely related to them, tend to consistently orient themselves toward one dimension of communication, viz. intentionality.

Ogden and Richards' (1949) proposal, which basically distinguishes between two usages of language, viz. to symbolize a referent (the symbolic function), and to denote emotions, attitudes, moods, etc. of the speaker (the emotive function, which is further subdivided, but the details do not matter for the present), can also be considered a 'pure' taxonomy of sub-functions, but one oriented toward the informative dimension of communication. One has to be careful with the basic distinction they suggest in terms of types of 'referential objects' of communicative acts, however. It relies upon a differentiation between the extra-subjective reality and the intra-subjective emotions. But a language user can only provide information about his/her intra-subjective interpretation of extra-subjective reality. (Cf. 4.1.)
Robinson's (1972) proposal, which covers fourteen functions, some of which are further subdivided (and the author himself states that "the scheme is by no means complete, and probably not exhaustive" (ibidem: 49)), appears to be a wild mixture of different phenomena (the indication that "the functions are not all at the same level of analysis" (ibidem: 49) is an understatement). Many of his functions are sub-functions of communication taken from various dimensions of communication or situated at different levels of abstraction, but some even relate to quite different phenomena (e.g., 'performatives' are in his list, while they obviously are a formal category, not a function). It stands to reason that such a conflation of dimensions and levels is not likely to enhance our understanding of the functionality of language.

Yet, there is one distinction in his typology which leads us to an interesting phenomenon not to be found in other proposals. Among Robinson's functions are 'expression of affect' on the one hand, and 'marking of the emitter for emotional state, personality and identity' on the other. Though they might seem to be akin, these are quite different things. While the former is a sub-function of communication (cf. (8) above), the latter is an unavoidable implication of the fact that language use is always performed by a person with an emotional life, a social and cultural background, etc., which are permanently present in his/her behavior. The use of language for expressing affect also provides the hearer with information about the speaker's emotional state etc., and the same is true if language is used for requesting or instructing, or whatever other communicative act. But marking the emitter is not an organic function either: it is not something which serves the speaker in pursuing the goal involved in his/her communicative act, it is not a property language must have in order to be fit for use in communication. Rather, it is a result of system-internal properties of the 'mechanism' producing (linguistic) behavior. Hence, this is not a function of language at all, but a 'side-effect' or 'noise' produced through language behavior (similar in status to the beating sound produced by a heart - cf. 2.), and a functional analysis of language will have to take this factor into account, next to the functions of language proper. (See 4.2.)

Of course, the above does not imply that a speaker cannot try to control or even consciously change the influence of his/her emotional situation, character, social and cultural background, etc. on his/her behavior. Maybe there are individual differences in the degree to which this is possible. Yet, any speaker will try e.g. to moderate or change the effects of his/her emotions on his/her language use if they have a negative effect on the communication (one can better not show nervousness when applying for a job), or if (s)he does not want to show his/her emotional involvement, or if (s)he wants to feign some emotion, etc. But these are no longer simply cases of marking the emitter. For the speaker
these are cases of (albeit indirect) expression of emotion (even though they are often intended not to be conceived by the hearer as a purposeful expression), resorting under the sub-functions of communication. Anyway, in many cases the speaker will not care about whether his/her emotion, personality, etc. is marked in his/her behavior. And to a certain degree (s)he is not even able to avoid it, since part of one's 'internal life', and part of the ways it is marked in behavior, are beyond control. Moreover, one's true emotions, personality, etc. will also be reflected in the way one tries to control or feign emotion etc. in behavior. Marking of the emitter in behavior is as unavoidable as the presence of an emitter to produce behavior.

The proposal by Jakobson (1960) might be a case of a function typology which ends up stating functions at a different level from the one intended. As a reminder: Jakobson starts from six different constitutive factors of a communicative situation.

The addressee sends a message to the addressee. To be operative the message requires a context referred to [...], graspable by the addressee, and either verbal or capable of being verbalized; a code fully, or at least partially, common to the addressee and addressee [...]; and, finally, a contact, a physical channel and psychological connection between the addressee and addressee [...]. (Jakobson 1960: 21)

These determine six functions: the context the referential function, the addressee the emotive function, the addressee the conative function, contact the phatic function, the code the metalinguistic function, and the message the poetic function.

The fact that Jakobson (just like Bühler, whose typology does relate to the level of the organic functions) conceived his function typology from the perspective of constitutive and inalienable factors in communication suggests that what he was looking for is an answer to the remaining question mark in (7). Yet, instead of wondering what these factors imply for the constitution of utterances a speaker uses for the purpose of communication, he has switched to a completely different level of analysis in formulating his functions. He has started discussing communicative acts in which the user explicitly orients him/herself toward one of these factors (mainly in the sense that the factor becomes a referential object in the act). Consequently, he has formulated sub-functions of communication.

Hence his referential, emotive and conative functions, which at first sight might be taken to correspond to Bühler's three functions (3.2), are conceived in such a way that they perfectly correspond to functions occurring e.g. in the typology by Dik and Kooij (1979), i.e. functions of the type stated with respect to (8) and (9) above. The same goes
for the phatic function, which is akin to the contact function in Dik and Kooij's system. As an example, Jakobson (1960: 24) cites (11).

\[ (11) \text{ Are you listening?} \]

Obviously, (11) only illustrates the fact that contact can be the object of a communicative act. But nothing is said about the potential role of the channel in constituting language use in communication in general. The same is true for the metalinguistic function (which is also to be found in Robinson’s typology). Jakobson illustrates that language can be used to perform communicative acts about language. But that is nothing more than stating a sub-function of communication (cf. also Busse 1975).

A similar criticism can be made for the three functions (the informative, expressive and directive) formulated by Copi (1978: 55ff): the similarity with Bühler’s typology indicates that he was aiming at organic functions, yet they turn out to be no different from Jakobson's, Dik and Kooij’s, etc. functions.

This confusion of levels of analysis is also illustrated by the fact that Jakobson and Copi more or less explicitly claim exhaustiveness with respect to their functions, just like Bühler and Halliday. In fact, it must be possible to formulate an exhaustive list of organic functions of language. But since Jakobson and Copi have formulated sub-functions of communication, there is actually no question of exhaustiveness of their typologies.

Though Hymes’ (1962) proposal strongly relies on Jakobson’s, the above criticism does not hold for him. The only difference with Jakobson is that Hymes replaces the factor 'context' by two factors, 'topic' and 'setting', and correspondingly states two functions instead of one, viz. the referential and the contextual respectively. The basic nature of Hymes' functions is identical to Jakobson's. But the main difference is that Hymes is perfectly aware of their nature. He explicitly presents them as types of communicative acts, and he clearly states that he is not looking for constants (or universals) in communication (unlike what is involved in searching for the organic functions of language) but that as an ethnomethodologist he is interested in the variables in it (cf. also Hymes 1972). He also explicitly denies exhaustiveness. And his points of dispute with Jakobson, e.g. as to the existence of a one-to-one correlation of factors in communication and functions (Hymes 1962: 120ff), mark the profound difference in attitude toward the function typologies in both scholars.

We still have not considered the poetic function mentioned by Jakobson (and Hymes), which under the name of 'aesthetic function' also occurs in Dik and Kooij's and Robinson's typologies. This is certainly not a sub-function of communication. There is much dispute
about the precise definition of poeticity, but it seems plausible to consider it a question of the way an utterance is conceived, with respect to both content and form. Hence, 'making' poeticity is not a communicative act, it is inherent to a communicative act. It is a characteristic of linguistic behavior; every utterance has poeticity. Still, one cannot say that it is an organic function of language either, for it is not an activity or property of utterances contributing to the achievement of their role in communication. Rather, it is a matter of the way a language user performs his/her communicative act, of the way (s)he uses language to reach his/her goals. This can depend on conscious choices (poeticity can be actively pursued in verbal behavior), but can be determined unconsciously as well. Thus, poeticity is no doubt closely related to the 'marking of the emitter' discussed above.

Of course, the way an utterance is constituted can be a topic as such for the language user, in language games, abstract (what might be called 'non-informative') literary productions ('l'art pour l'art'), etc. In such cases the language user tries to express the aesthetics of the linguistic medium as such, and one could say that the verbal means become object of communication, just like emotions, weather and politics can be object of communication. Also in more 'realistic' literature this is at least one of the objects of communication. Hence, showing the aesthetics of the linguistic medium is a sub-function of communication. Still, poeticity as such is rather an inherent factor to language use in general, hence Jakobson is no doubt right in claiming that every utterance has a poetic value. This is the case for a newspaper article, an advertisement or a political debate no less than for a poem. Although under normal circumstances the degree of poeticity of the latter will be considerably lower than the degree of poeticity of the former (but there are notable exceptions, such as Cicero's speeches). Poeticity is obviously a gradual matter. (A similar criticism on Jakobson's poetic function in Busse 1975.)

3.2. ON THE ORGANIC FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE

So far we have only found indirect suggestions as to probable organic functions of language in communication (language provides information, it serves intentions). Only few function typologies in the literature appear to contribute more directly to insight into this matter, viz. mainly Bühler (1934) and Halliday (1970a, 1976). Yet, there are clear differences between these proposals.

Bühler's 'Organon Modell der Sprache' starts from the basic view that "die Sprache sei ein organum, um einer dem anderen etwas mitzuteilen über die Dinge" (1934: 24). The production of an utterance is a reaction to the stimulation by an object ('Ding') within the field of perception of 'einer'. Hearing the utterance is for 'der andere' a stimulus to look
at the object. This leads Bühler to postulating three functions of language, viz. (i) 'Darstellung': it represents objects and situations; (ii) 'Ausdruck': it depends on the transmitter, and expresses his/her personality; and (iii) 'Appell': it is an impulse to the receiver, and orients his/her internal or external behavior.

Halliday (1970b: 141, 1974b: 95) has criticized Bühler's analysis (and function typologies in general) for being much too extrinsic. Such an approach is, according to Halliday, sociologically or psychologically oriented, but cannot throw light on the nature of linguistic structure. As an alternative, he advocates an intrinsic approach in which each systematic contrast in a grammar is assigned to some network of choices which is related to a particular function. He distinguishes three relatively independent networks (cf. Halliday 1976: 14), each corresponding to one of the following functions: (i) the ideational function: language expresses contents, viz. the speaker's experience of reality and of his/her internal life; (ii) the interpersonal function: language is used to interfere in the process of interaction, to establish and maintain interpersonal relations in communication; and (iii) the textual function: language is used to establish links with itself and with elements of the situation in which it is used. The textual function is considered the internal function of language, and it is said to be instrumental to both other functions.

Apparently, the only function for which there is a fair match between Halliday's and Bühler's systems is the ideational/Darstellung function. Halliday's interpersonal function is a junction of Bühler's Ausdruck and Appell. And Halliday's textual function is completely absent in Bühler's system.

In line with his general criticism on Bühler's approach, Halliday motivates his junction of the Ausdruck (or expressive) function and Appell (or conative) function by claiming that

The difference between these two is significant psychologically, but linguistically it is very tenuous: is an interrogative, for example, a demand to be given information (conative), or an expression of a desire for knowledge (expressive)? It is not surprising to find that expressive and conative are not really distinct in the language system. They are combined into a single 'personal' function - or, as I would prefer to call it, to bring out its social nature, an 'interpersonal' function. (Halliday 1976: 27)

No doubt, Halliday is right in claiming that it is irrelevant to wonder whether an interrogative is a request for information or an expression of a desire for knowledge, for a question is both. Yet, this is not really the point of Bühler's distinction between Ausdruck and Appell. There is a problem with the distinction, but this has to do with the way Bühler approaches the entire phenomenon of communication.
Bühler clearly takes an 'objective' point of view in analyzing communication. He tries to escape from the perspective of the acting individual, considering language from the point of view of a neutral observer isolated from the actual communicative processes in the language users. This point is also made by Reichling.

The communication process in language is not a mechanically closed and homogeneous continuum [...]. There is only continuity on the level of the physical phenomena. The language experiences of speaker and hearer develop outside of it and over it. Precisely insofar as there is 'language' [...], there is duality; insofar as there is physical cohesion, there is unity. In order for the communication to be complete, the process must be continued consciously on each of the poles, speaker and hearer.

[...] Communication implies two distinct processes, one in the speaker, one in the hearer. In between and apart from these there are undoubtedly sound waves, yet speaker and hearer do not 'communicate' in sound waves, but in language; physically there is 'contact' in sound waves. Bühler rightly looks for the explanation of the uniformity of these language experiences in a sign function. Yet, in his formulation he situates it where it is not to be found, viz. in the sensory perceptible world, and not in the experience, where he should look for it and practically finds it. (Reichling 1935: 28-29; my translation)

Thus Bühler has not really considered the functionality of language for its user. He has only inventoried some essential moments in a communicative situation, leaving open what happens in the interaction partners involved in it. Moreover, in doing so he has focussed on just one phenomenon from the perspective of two participants in the communication, viz. that language refers to something, thus implying only one of the organic functions of language, viz. what Halliday calls the ideational function.\(^\text{11}\) And even in his formulation of this function his objective point of view is apparent, for he only refers to the extra-subjective reality, not to the intra-subjective reality (cf. the discussion of Ogden and Richards (1949) in 3.1). Thus, even linguistic reference is separated from the language user. Halliday does not commit this mistake in defining his ideational function.\(^\text{12}\)

Consequently, Halliday's discussion of the interpersonal function involves matters which are not really at stake for Bühler. But even in as far as the distinction between Ausdruck and Appell does touch upon the importance of the point of view of the speaker on the one hand and the hearer on the other in communication, Halliday's motivation for conflating the two in one function does not hold water. The problem signalled in his discussion of the interrogative is not really to the point. What is important is that in a
communicative act there are two clearly distinguishable parties, viz. the speaker who performs the act with some purpose, and the hearer who is to be reached and influenced by the speaker. Hence, even from the perspective of the speaker, the difference between his/her own position and the hearer’s position (each in terms of interests, goals, rights, values, face, etc.) is crucial. This may be a 'psychological' matter, but precisely to the degree that it is cognitively relevant, there is every reason to consider a communicative act to have a double functionality in this respect. More generally, from a functional perspective Halliday’s claim that relevance at a psychological or social level does not mean relevance at the linguistic level is hard to come by.

Halliday’s textual function can hardly be considered a phenomenon relevant at the level of organic functions. It is even doubtful whether one can call this a function at all in one of the senses discussed in 1. Of course, it is true that language in communication usually takes the form of a text. Linguistic acts are not normally performed in isolation, but occur in groups, each one embedded in a verbal context. Yet, this is a matter of the formal appearance of language: the text is nothing but one aspect of the syntax of language, and it is in this format that language fulfills its functions for the user. Hence, as Halliday himself puts it, the textual dimension is instrumental for the other functions, in the same way as language in general can be said to be instrumental for its functions. Halliday is also right in claiming that the textual embedding of an utterance has an effect on the organization of an utterance. But this is not different from the fact that the sentential embedding of a constituent has effect on the organization of that constituent.13

Criticism on Halliday’s functions (as well as on his one-to-one approach to formal system and function) is also to be found in Van der Geest (1975), yet the alternatives he advocates are not without problems either. He replaces the interpersonal function by an intentional function, which represents only the speaker’s interests in communication. In the light of the discussion above, this is partly appropriate. Yet Van der Geest does not introduce the required second function relating to the fact that there is also a hearer involved in communication.

He also accepts a textual function, yet it is defined so vaguely that appropriate comments are hard to give. It says that an utterance is somehow related to context and situation. In as far as this covers the same type of phenomena as Halliday’s function, the criticism given above remains valid. In as far as it also refers to the fact that an utterance relates to the entire communicative situation in which it is used, this is begging the question what this relationship involves, and what the functionality of language involves in this respect. But it is not a formulation of a function of language.

Finally, Van der Geest splits up Halliday’s ideational function into a referential
function (an utterance refers to a state of affairs) and an attitudinal function (it provides information about the speaker's interpretation of the state of affairs referred to). This is questionable, however. If this is intended to mean that an utterance refers to the extra-subjective world and to the intra-subjective interpretation of it, Van der Geest is introducing an irrelevant and even dangerous distinction. A language user can only refer to his/her intra-subjective interpretation of reality, since that is the only thing (s)he knows (cf. 4.1). Of course, somehow language must also refer to the extra-subjective reality, since the intra-subjective interpretation is based on it. But that does not concern the matter of the functionality of language for its user. Alternatively, if Van der Geest is distinguishing between the fact that language can refer to (the speaker's interpretation of) reality and to the speaker's attitudes toward (his interpretation of) reality, he has returned to a distinction between sub-functions of communication of the type made by Ogden and Richards (1949). At the level of the organic functions, the only thing that matters is that language provides information about things (reality, attitudes, and no matter what else).

4. TOWARD A TYPOLOGY OF LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS

4.1. COMMUNICATION AND HOW TO ANALYZE IT

The balance of our discussion of the literature is rather meager. We have only found a clear indication that the (or at least a) role function of language is communication.

(7) \[ E_{language} \rightarrow ? \rightarrow E_{user} \rightarrow A_{communication} \]

The determination of the organic functions of language in communication remains a problem, however. Though the literature has provided some partial answers (the observation that language refers, that it serves the speaker's purposes, but also has to relate to the hearer's perspective), no clear-cut typology has emerged. Let's therefore try to provide a more systematic answer.

An obvious starting point is an analysis of the phenomenon of communication as such (i.e. the way which was also followed by Bühler and Jakobson). Since language functions in communication, if we know what a language user does when communicating we can determine the properties language must have or the activities it must fulfil in order to be suitable as an instrument in communication. Of course, we still have not dealt with the question whether communication is the only role function of language. For the time being the answer is not really important. The observation that language is used for communication implies that it must have organic functions allowing this, which have to be
revealed anyway in view of a functional analysis of the system. If afterwards language would turn out to have further role functions, we can again determine the organic functions it ought to fulfil for that purpose, and relate them to the organic functions noted on the basis of our analysis of communication. (Cf. 5.)

In order to avoid the types of problems noted with respect to the analyses discussed in the previous sections, some basic remarks on the nature of communication and its implications for the further discussion are in order. Let's take Franck's (1980) characterization of communicative acts as a starting point.

Wir können von interaktiver Handlung sprechen, wenn ein Handelnder A eine Handlung Ha nach einer anderen Person B bzw. nach erwarteten oder vorhandenen Handlungsresultaten von B ausrichtet und damit rechnet, daß sein Verhalten von B wahrgenommen und als Handlung gegenüber B nach erwartbaren bzw. konventionellen Kriterien interpretiert wird bzw. wenn B das Verhalten von A als eine auf ihn bezogene Handlung Ha wertet. [...]. Kommunikative Handlungen sind interaktive Handlungen mit einem Aussagegehalt, die so angelegt sind, daß der andere die Handlung aufgrund von (Symbol-)Konventionen als eine bestimmte Handlung erkennt, die die augenblickliche Interaktionssituation für ihn in bestimmter Weise verändert. [...]. Jede Kommunikation hat das Ziel der Verständigung. (Franck 1980: 36-37)

This characterization requires one amendment. Franck seems to be differentiating between interactive and communicative acts on the basis of the absence or presence of an 'Aussagegehalt' or 'expressive content'. Yet, in principle every interactive act has an (expressive) content, otherwise one cannot speak of 'interpretation' of the act on the part of the receiver. This goes for acts by animals as well as by humans, and by non-verbal means as well as by means of language. As an example of a non-communicative interaction Franck mentions a boxing match. Of course, the 'content' of a blow of the fist in this situation is not immediately obvious. But that is only due to the conventions of the game, which exhaustively determine the value of the acts performed (and as such a blow does gain a very specific content in this situation). If a person consciously and purposefully hits someone else outside the context of this game, however, his/her blow has an obvious content, and will no doubt be interpreted by the victim and generate consequences for the relationship between the individuals involved. The same goes for acts like kissing, hand waving, etc.

What does differ for various kinds of communicative acts are the properties of the expression of the contents, due to the nature of the medium chosen. There are e.g.
considerable differences in this respect (a.o. in directness) between a kiss, a red heart drawn on a piece of paper, and the words 'I love you', although the content can be identical. Yet, this is a matter for a functional analysis of the interactive system under consideration, and does not have to affect our analysis of the phenomenon of communication as such.

As Franck says, communicative acts aim to achieve mutual understanding. In order to fully understand what this means and implies for an analysis of communication, a digression into human epistemology is necessary. If we axiomatically accept the existence of individuals and of a world (called the extra-subjective reality so far) independent of them (Givón 1979: 317), the question to be raised is to what degree individuals are able to know the outside world. Is their knowledge a photographic reduplication of this world (objective), or is it rather a newly created reality only indirectly related (if at all) to the outside world (subjective)?

Human perception seems to be more than a passive experiencing of stimuli from the outside world. Information is processed at different levels, from the purely physical till the conceptual, and processing implies manipulating the information depending on the codes of each intermediate system. No doubt, this has influence on the information itself, distorting it in certain ways. Conceptually, new information does not remain isolated, but is actively integrated in and further interpreted from the perspective of the knowledge existing in the individual, additionally causing values, feelings etc. Hence, conceptualization (i.e. anchoring information in memory) fully depends on an individual's background, which in turn is dependent on genetic predispositions and earlier experiences with the environment. A human’s mental world of knowledge, values, feelings etc. is at the same time the result of and the basis for his/her perceiving of and acting in the world.

This view is nicely illustrated in Piaget’s theory of assimilation and accommodation as principles of the cognitive development of individuals. According to Piaget an individual first tries to assimilate new information to the categories already present in his/her cognitive structures. (S)he does so until contradictions start to occur in the cognitive systems, disturbing his/her equilibrium. Only from that moment on is (s)he forced to reorganize and accommodate his/her cognitive categories, so as to resolve the contradictions and regain an equilibrium. (Cf. Piaget 1971, 1980a, 1980b). These principles were intended to account for child development, but they seem applicable at the level of concept acquisition in adults as well (although other characteristics of the acquisition process may be quite different).

An impressive amount of examples illustrating the information distorting nature of perception can be found in Watzlawick (1976). He concludes
that the notions of 'order' and 'chaos' do not have an objective content, contrary to the general opinion, but - like so many things in life - derive their meaning from the point of view of the observer. (Watzlawick 1976: 62; my translation)

In Wittgenstein's words:

Ich bin meine Welt
Alles was wir sehen, könnte auch anders sein.
Alles was wir überhaupt beschreiben können, könnte auch anders sein.
Es gibt keine Ordnung der Dinge a priori
(Wittgenstein 1922: 5.63 and 5.634)

What remains of the outside world in the individual's knowledge can only be indirectly related to the 'original', and a subjectivist (or 'experientalist' - Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 185ff)\textsuperscript{4}) view of human knowledge seems unavoidable. (See also Van Dijk 1981.)

How does the subjective interpretation of the outside world in two individuals relate? Obviously, there can be neither identity, nor fundamental difference. Except for identical twins, no two humans have an identical genetic base, yet the overall principles of genetic determination in humans are universal. No two humans have an identical acquired background (individual, social, cultural), in that the variety of environments in which they have been, and the interactions they have had with their environments, can never have been the same (even genetically identical twins raised in identical environments end up being somewhat different individuals). Still, from a certain level on the reality in which each individual lives obeys the same general principles and rules.\textsuperscript{15}

Communication has to be viewed from the perspective of the tension between community and difference, between variability and identity in humans' subjective experience of the world. Communication is possible because there is a partial correspondence between the subjective reality of two individuals, and it is necessary because there is a partial discrepancy between their realities.\textsuperscript{16} For personal and social reasons (ultimately for reasons of survival of the individual and the species), humans have an interest in and/or desire for a clear definition of their understanding of the world relative to other people's understanding, and, if possible, in/for closing down the gap between different subjective interpretations of reality. In principle, their aim is to find the largest possible intersubjective consensus about their interpretation of reality (and this obviously includes the social and interpersonal reality as well as the physical reality).\textsuperscript{17}
These observations on the nature of communication have some clear consequences for its analysis. In principle, one could approach the matter from two angles, viz. (i) the 'objective' perspective of a neutral observer not involved in the interaction, or (ii) the 'subjective' perspective of one of the interaction partners. The above implies that communication can only be understood from the second angle (cf. also Parret 1982), not only because the interaction concerns the subjective views of the interaction partners, but also because communication itself is subject to interpretation by those involved in it. Each individual makes his/her own interpretation of the acts performed and the social and personal relationships holding within the situation, and can only hypothesize about the communication partner's judgement of these factors (cf. also Dik 1977: 215). The possibility to communicate, and the actual constitution of the acts performed, fully depends on these interpretations and hypotheses. Taking the objective perspective could only lead one astray, as was clearly demonstrated by Bühler's failure to find the organic functions of language.18

Another element of the perspective to be taken in analyzing communication which deserves some attention concerns the exact status of the elements 'speaker' and 'hearer', and 'producing' and 'understanding'. In certain branches of the pragmatic literature one frequently finds a tendency to take an exclusively interpretive perspective on communication, often on principled grounds, i.e. to analyze communication only from the perspective of understanding linguistic acts. In terms of hypotheses, this mostly results in a one-sided concern with hearer performance, and a total disregard for speaker performance. Some notorious examples are Parret (1979), (1980), (1982), (1986), Franck (1980), and Wilson and Sperber (1984), and even Levinson (1983) tends in this direction. The source for this attitude is not always obvious, and probably it is not the same in all instances. In some cases this might be caused by the acceptance of the Chomskyan model of language, in which pragmatic (and, thus, communicative) aspects of language are automatically assigned an interpretive role vis-a-vis its syntactic aspects. (On the plausibility of this view, see Nuyts 1988.) More interesting in the present context is the type of reasoning Parret invokes for this point of view.

Parret's argument is rooted in his concept of communication as a discursive activity which is the expression of theoretical and practical reasoning.

the centrality of discourse-bound rationality and prescriptive-inferential reasoning transforms pragmatics into a theory of understanding. Understanding has an asymmetric priority on production once one takes seriously the specificity of reasoning processes in discourse. (Parret 1986: 755)
The view on the discursiveness of communication and the role of rationality and reasoning in it is in perfect agreement with the above characterization of the nature of communication. Similarly, it is basically sound to claim that communication turns around subjects’ understanding of reality. Yet, this is only part of the truth, for rational reasoning is not less a matter of creating a subjective view of the world. There is no contradiction whatsoever between understanding and creation. On the contrary: both are essential and often hardly distinguishable dimensions of all cognitive activity.

This matter should not be confused with the question as to the status of and relationship between productive and interpretive performance in linguistic behavior, however. Both ‘modes’ have elements of understanding and creation in the sense just mentioned, being guided by similar subjective positions in the communication. As far as the relation between these modes in communication is concerned, Parret’s suggestion that interpretation (the perspective of the hearer) has priority over production (the perspective of the speaker) is simply mistaken, for, trivially, the acts constituting communicative behavior are made by the speaker, not by the hearer. If nothing has been produced, there is nothing to be understood. The speaker perspective always dominates the hearer perspective in the sense that the latter necessarily undergoes the act by the former. (Of course, this does not say anything at all about the relationship between the interaction partners, each of which is both speaker and hearer, constantly changing roles in communication.) If one really wants to use these terms, then there is an ‘asymmetric priority’ of production over interpretation. And this is reflected in the fact that an analysis of the functionality of linguistic behavior will automatically take a productive orientation, i.e. the perspective of the one constituting the act, not the one receiving the act (as is clearly demonstrated in the discussion of proposals in foregoing sections). Interpreting an act is (at least in first instance) reconstructing in which way it is functional for the one performing it.

Of course, this has nothing to do with the question whether in analyzing language performance in communication one should pay more attention to the processes of production or interpretation. Both are indispensable aspects of communicative behavior, and each normal language user possesses both capacities. Hence, it is inappropriate to claim that "L is a language of a community only in case the members of this community understand the discursive sequence of L" (Parret 1986: 756) (see also Parret 1982), as it would be inappropriate to claim this with respect to the production of L. L is the language of a community only if its members can produce and understand L.19
4.2. BASIC FACTORS AND ORGANIC FUNCTIONS

The question we ought to answer is then: what are the elements in a communicative situation playing a role if a language user constitutes an utterance to perform some communicative act? Let's start from the most simple, prototypical structure of communication, in which two speakers/hearers (S/HS) act toward each other in a dyadic exchange, and consider more complex or deviant interaction patterns later.

In order for a communicative act to occur, one S/H must have an intention with respect to the other, concerning an aspect of his/her interpretation of reality (henceforth the 'state of affairs', SoA) which is somehow relevant in the actual situation (i.e. to both S/HS). Relevance must be taken broadly: S/H can be eager to learn more about the SoA, (s)he can want to tell something about the SoA, (s)he can want to change the SoA, (s)he can want to respond to a desire concerning the SoA from the side of the other S/H, etc. A communicative exchange is initiated through an act according to this scheme by one of the S/HS; it is settled if the SoA is recognized as relevant and the conditions of the situation as acceptable by the other S/H; and it lasts as long as it remains relevant and acceptable for both S/HS (of course, the pattern can be continued by switching to a new SoA relevant to both S/HS). Each individual act in this situation is performed according to the actual S/H's interpretation of the situation.

This means that an S/H has to take into consideration at least the following factors in deciding how to act.

(i) The frame of reference

S/H has to be concerned with the relevant SoA occurring in his/her interpreted reality. The notion of 'interpreted reality' may be somewhat misleading, for an SoA can involve everything that can be thought of, including knowledge of the outside world, but also emotions, attitudes, abstract or fictive states and events, etc., i.e. things which have never been experienced in the outside world (cf. also Dik 1982). Let's call this entire domain of referential objects in S/HS knowledge the 'universe of interpretation' (UI).

Deciding on whether and how to explicate an SoA to another S/H (henceforth H/S) is not a simple matter (cf. Grice's (1975, 1989) maxims). S/H must also have an hypothesis about H/S's knowledge of the SoA, and take into account how the SoA in his/her own and in H/S's knowledge relate (cf. the role of mutual knowledge in discourse - e.g. Clark and Marshall 1981, Kreckel 1981, Smith (ed.) 1982).

(ii) The intention
S/H has to be careful to follow his/her intentions with respect to the SoA in making clear to H/S in which way the SoA is relevant to him/her. Intention may be an intuitively clear notion, yet it is difficult to grasp theoretically. Apart from few exceptions (e.g. Searle 1983), the notion is hardly ever explicitly discussed, not even in semantic theories which accept the notion as central, or in cognitive psychology. Anyway, intention is a 'layered', hierarchical phenomenon (Searle 1983): an act can have several levels of intentionality, starting from the intention that the act be performed, and ending with the intention that the act would achieve its ultimate purpose. Specifically in case of communication, there is also always a 'communicative intention', i.e. that H/S would recognize the act as such, and mostly what might be called a 'perlocutionary intention' (to use a term from speech act theory), i.e. the intention that H/S would accept the SoA communicated to be true, provide information about it, perform some change in it, etc. (cf. the speech act classifications). Perlocutionary intentions can in principle be embedded endlessly. From the level of perlocutionary intentions on S/H can also have more than one intention with an act at one level within the intentional chain.

In conceiving an act, S/H again has to be concerned not only with his/her own intentions, but also with what in his/her hypothesis could be the intentions of H/S. What are the chances that H/S accepts and shares S/H’s intention? Does H/S have intentions himself concerning the SoA? Such matters can determine whether and how S/H will perform his/her act and pursue his/her objectives with it.

Note that Franck’s (1980) claim that intentions are not expressed in (linguistic) behavior and are therefore not retrievable for the hearer, is basically illogical. It is true that not all intentions have to be made explicit. S/H can judge some of them to be unimportant for H/S and his/her reaction. Sometimes (s)he may want to hide his/her real intentions (which is an intention again, of course), and suggest fake intentions (i.e. lying, misleading, etc.). Anyway, as far as there are intentions directly relevant to the communicative act to be performed, the speaker has to make them explicit, for if the hearer does not grasp them, (s)he cannot comply with them. And even hidden or background intentions must be retrievable somehow from an act, for the act must have something to do with them if it is to serve them.

(iii) The social relationship

Communication is based on the fact that an individual is a social being related to and dependent on others, also with respect to the intentional act being performed. A communicative situation automatically creates a specific social and interpersonal reality which offers possibilities but at the same time creates restrictions and obligations.
concerning possible roles and related behavioral patterns for the interaction partners. These are due partly to general socio-culturally rooted conventions concerning role patterns in society, and partly to the strictly intersubjective relationship holding between the interaction partners. This involves a complex and often very subtle interplay of rules concerning matters such as politeness and deference, power (natural or institutionalized), solidarity, prestige, 'face', etc. (cf. e.g. Argyle 1973, Brown and Levinson 1979, Lakoff and Tannen 1979).

Obviously, S/H has to evaluate his/her relationship with H/S in order to decide whether to perform an act, and if (s)he does (s)he has to comply with the rules as they apply to this relationship, in general and in the specific situation (unless (s)he wants to break them, of course). And, again, (s)he has to form hypotheses about H/S's conception of his/her relationship with S/H, and about H/S's expectations as to the rules of behavior related to the values of the relationship. This can determine what S/H can expect from H/S, and how to act in order to expect most from him/her, or at least to avoid that H/S would refuse to accept the specific role pattern imposed upon the situation by S/H on the basis of his/her intentions.

The three factors mentioned so far correspond to the three components of the communicative situation indicated in Bühler's 'Organon Modell'. As noted in 3.1, Jakobson and Hymes have suggested some further components to be taken into account, and at least one of them does have to be considered a relevant factor for the speaker's decision what to do and how to do it.

(iv) The setting

Communicative interaction is always spatially and temporally embedded in some physically, culturally and socially specified situation, and it is influenced by the characteristics of this situation or setting. This is not to be taken in the sense that this situation can be the frame of reference for S/H. Jakobson's factor of 'context' is characterized this way, and as such (S/H's subjective interpretation of) it is nothing more than a potentially relevant SoA to which S/H's acts can refer. Hymes' distinction between 'topic' and 'setting' seems to introduce an appropriate differentiation in the status of the situation. The former concerns the situation as part of the frame of reference for S/H, like Jakobson's 'context', but the latter concerns the situation as an always present factor influencing S/H's acts, independently from being a relevant SoA expressed in the acts. Thus, the setting can work as an 'interfering' factor, as in the case of interaction in a noisy context (a pub e.g.), or as a 'tempering' factor, e.g. in places which radiate power or
authority (e.g. a church, a courtroom). Or, most importantly, it can be a 'defining' factor, in specific institutionally ruled interactions (e.g. a game, an examination, a lawsuit, a medical consultation, etc.).

S/H has to judge this factor, first of all to decide whether (s)he will or may perform an act, and if (s)he does, it influences the way (s)he can do so. Respect for a church e.g. can hold one from talking even though one might have something to say; or, if the intention is too strong, it can make one use reduced utterances in a whispering mode. (On physical factors influencing communicative acts, cf. e.g. Sapir 1912.) Institutional settings to a large degree determine which intentions interaction partners may have, which SoAs can be relevant, and which roles the interaction partners can take (cf. e.g. Leodolter 1975, Ehlich and Rehbein (eds.) 1983, Fisher and Todd (eds.) 1983, Redder (ed.) 1983).

The 'channel', which Jakobson mentions as a separate factor, can actually be considered a special sub-element of the setting, for it co-determines the nature of the setting. Thus, the channel can partly determine or limit the possible means for communication, or can rule out certain aspects of the medium. E.g., telephone excludes the use of non-verbal, gestural and visual behavior. Written communication also excludes intonation. Moreover, the channel co-determines the physical and cultural setting of S/H and H/S. In case of telephone conversation it is temporally identical but spatially different. In written communication it is both temporally and spatially different. (Cf. Schegloff 1979, Settekorn 1981, Östman 1987, De Rycker 1987.) Evidently, these elements co-determine whether and how S/H will perform some act.

As with the factors mentioned before, S/H also has to take into account his/her hypotheses concerning the way H/S evaluates the different aspects of the setting. Does H/S have respect for a church? Does H/S feel obliged by the institutional setting, and to what degree? What is the setting in which the person at the other end of the telephone line is speaking?

The two remaining factors in Jakobson's typology, 'message' and 'code', are not relevant for determining the functions of language. Concerning the former, I can basically refer back to the discussion of the poetic and textual functions in 3. It is precisely for linguistic behavior (the message) that we are trying to find out which factors determine its occurrence, hence this element is neutral in our consideration (as is accurately suggested in Bühler's discussion).

Exactly the same remark can be made for the code. The code is inherent to the medium of communication, in that it exhaustively determines its structural character. Morse code, e.g., is characterized by a certain syntax, just like language, and more specifically
each single language. A message is always encoded in a code (sic). Of course, S/H and H/S have to agree on some code which they both sufficiently master to warrant understandability (i.e. expressibility of an SoA). The actual choice does not only have to do with understandability, however. Often the interaction partners have several languages or language variants, registers, sociolects or idiolects, etc. which they both master, and then the choice can be determined by intentions, social conventions or the pressure of the setting (cf. e.g. the political and/or social implications of the choice of Dutch or French in Brussels, of French or English in Quebec, of English or Welsh in Wales, etc., or the situation boundness of the choice of formal or informal language). (Cf. e.g. Clyne 1972, Heller et al. 1982, Woolard 1987.) Hence, just like all other aspects of language, the choice of a code is determined precisely by the four factors outlined above.

So far we have only considered the prototypical communicative situation. Are these four factors also sufficient to account for more complicated or deviant communication patterns? First, often more than two interaction partners are present. If so, there seem to be two possibilities for S/H (with different intermediate stages): either (s)he considers all H/Ss to be an entity (a group), which means that the dyadic pattern remains basically the same; or (s)he differentiates between the different H/Ss present, and then at least some of the factors in the basic interaction pattern discussed above are multiplicatied with the number of H/Ss. It can be necessary to determine intentions toward each H/S (unless they are identical for all of them), and to take into account the probable intentions of each of them. S/H has to take into consideration potential differences between his/her and each H/S's interpretation of reality (the relevant SoA). (S)he has to take into consideration his/her social and interpersonal relationship with each H/S, as well as his/her hypothesis about each H/S's conception of it. And under circumstances it can be necessary to take into account differences in the setting of each H/S (cf. a triadic telephone conversation). Finally, S/H may have to take into consideration this entire pattern as it exists between the different H/Ss. (Cf. e.g. Clark and Carlson (1982) on the role of mutual knowledge of two H/Ss.) Yet, all of this is not simply a matter of multiplication of interaction patterns, for the different patterns will no doubt interfere in S/H's behavior. (Often an S/H will communicate differently with an H/S depending on whether they are alone or whether there are other H/Ss present.) Anyway, the same basic factors remain valid, only their realization is much more complicated.

Second, there are types of communication in which the direction of the action is more or less one-sided. This is the case e.g. in speeches, in which there does remain a minimal form of direct reaction in terms of the general attitude of the public, and of questions or remarks from individuals in the public. In radio and television broadcasts, as in other
forms of mass media communication, in which the channel imposes one-directionality, the manifest reaction from the H/Ss is as good as non-existent. Of course, there is a reaction in the hearer or reader, but the speaker cannot observe it (except afterwards, in calls to the studio or letters to the editor, e.g.). Yet, in these cases it does remain necessary for S/H to make clear the SoA (s)he has in mind, also on the basis of his/her hypothesis about what the average H/S might know about it; (s)he has to follow his/her intentions in acting, probably also pre-conceiving possible intentions from the H/Ss (it does not make sense to announce a radio game to which listeners can respond by calling the studio, if one can be sure that nobody is going to respond); (s)he obviously has to respect the norms inherent to the role-relationship with the average listener/reader; and mass-media involve a specific type of setting (also determined by the channels they use), which again has to be taken into account.

Non-active but 'participating' H/Ss present in the communicative situation next to active H/Ss might receive more or less the same status as the public of a speech (of course, there can be different degrees of involvement of H/Ss in the conversation - cf. Clark 1987). S/H can develop an interaction scheme for them, next to the interaction scheme for the active H/S(s), yet according to the same principles as in one-directional communication. Purely accidental H/Ss, which have nothing to do with the conversation, might also influence the communication, yet rather as part of the factor 'setting'. Again, the basic factors all appear to remain intact. There are only differences in how they are realized.

We may therefore conclude that these four factors are always valid for all types of communicative situations. Communicative success depends on the way in which S/H manages to maneuver within the possibilities they offer and restrictions they impose, in deciding what to do and how to do it. Moreover, they are always equally important, although various phenomena might seem to contradict this.

The fact that for an S/H communicative success means realizing his/her intentions might be taken as a suggestion that intention is the most important factor. In fact, there are many meaning theories which nearly exclusively focus on the notion of intention. This is mistaken, however. Intention may be the causing or 'driving' factor of communication, but an intention never stands alone. It always has an object (some SoA), and it is always oriented toward an H/S within some environment. Hence, realizing intentions in the first place crucially depends on how S/H manages to make clear what his/her intentions are all about. The frame of reference could be called the 'grounding' factor of communication. And realizing intentions also crucially depends on H/S's willingness and ability to comply with them, hence S/H absolutely has to take into account his/her interpersonal and social
obligations and the conventions inherent in the setting. Failing to do so would not only lead to a communicative breakdown, but could also result in sanctions from H/S. The social relationship and the setting can be called 'restricting' factors of communication. Hence, though the four factors may be assigned a different 'role' in communication, they certainly do not differ in importance.

Though it is certainly appropriate to react against predominantly intention-oriented meaning theories like speech act theory, one should also be careful with a number of attempts, especially from an ethnolinguistic perspective, to go the other direction and reduce the role of intention in communication. Duranti (1988) argues that in Samoan culture the effect of communicative acts is often much more important to the community than the intention of the acting person (see also Du Bois 1987). This does not change the fact that communicative (or whatever other) acts involve an intention on the part of the actor, however. As Searle puts it:

[It is a mistake] to suppose there is some close connection, perhaps even identity, between intention and responsibility. [...] We hold people responsible for many things they do not intend and we do not hold them responsible for many things they do intend. An example of the former type is the driver who recklessly runs over a child. He did not intend to run over the child but he is held responsible. And an example of the latter is the man who is forced at gunpoint to sign a contract. He intended to sign the contract but is not held responsible. (Searle 1983: 103)

It is beyond doubt that cultural and social circumstances influence intentions of language users, and the ways they try to realize them. If one knows that in the community one is part of one will be held responsible for the effects of one's acts irrespective of the intentions, this will obviously influence one's intentions, and will cause greater caution in deciding on whether and how to pursue them. But intention does remain an indispensable concept in explaining behavior even in the Samoan cases Duranti discusses.

Du Bois (1987) argues that there are even cases of language use in which intention does not play a role at all. He specifically refers to different types of ritual speech, such as the 'sixteen cowrie divination' of the Yoruba or symbol-spinning among the Sisala. But, again, his analysis does not distinguish between intention and responsibility, or in this case more generally 'personality'. In any case, there is intention behind the utterances spoken by the medium of an oracle at least in three respects. First the diviner must have the intention to respect the oracle and speak the phrases which correspond to what the oracle 'says' (e.g. the number of cowrie shells facing mouth up). Second, the phrases spoken by
the diviner have been coined sometime in the past by some person who has had an intention with them, probably even directly concerning the divinatory process. Thirdly, the fact that in many of the societies having divination the utterances triggered by an oracle are not taken to be produced by a person, not even some abstract deity, still does not mean that the utterances are not perceived by the consulter as having an intentionality. They do have to be perceived as such, for otherwise the consulter of the oracle would not act accordingly. As such, the communication process between the consulter and the oracle/diviner cannot be understood without the element intention as an inherent factor. (A detailed discussion in Nuyts i.p.)

In judging the importance of the different factors in communication, one should also not be misled by the impression that sometimes certain factors become predominant over others, due to the situational circumstances. This involves different types of cases.

One type occurs if one of the central factors in communication becomes the topic of the conversation. This may seem trivial, but it is precisely in this respect that e.g. Jakobson and Copi have been misled in formulating their function typologies. One might for instance get the impression that in an examination in school the frame of reference is the main factor in communication. This is appropriate only in the sense that communication is centered around the topic of having knowledge of reality. The decisions of the interlocutors are still determined by all the factors in the communicative situation, the frame of reference being only one of them. This involves an institutional setting which largely prescribes roles, intentions and topics. The examiner has the intention to find out things, not about SoAs as such, but rather about the examinee's knowledge of specific SoAs. The examinee has the intention to show that (s)he has adequate knowledge of the SoAs involved (or, sometimes, not to show that (s)he has no adequate knowledge of them). The examiner has absolute rights to test the examinee's knowledge, though (s)he should respects general rules concerning fairness, courtesy, etc. And the social role of the examinee is one of subjectedness to the examiner.

It is easy to provide similar examples for the other factors in communication. The social relationship between S/H and H/S can become topic of their conversation if they want to end it, settle it, improve it, etc., in an institutional context (e.g. in case of divorce, in a lawyer's office) or not (e.g. the dispute between a drunken husband and his/her wife late at night in their bedroom). Intention can become the topic of an interaction if one of the interlocutors starts questioning the intention behind the previous act of the other interlocutor. The setting can become a topic if the interaction partners start questioning the rules inherent in some institutional setting (e.g. a student complaining to his/her teacher about the unfairness of examination procedures). In all such cases, the apparent
dominance of one factor boils down to its being the relevant SoA in the interaction. Each act concerning this SoA has to conform to the values for all factors mentioned above, including the values of the factor which is the current topic of communication (there is an intention in talking about an intention, one has to act according to social norms in talking about social norms, etc.). Of course, if a basic factor is under discussion, its values can change with each new turn in the interaction. But this is not exceptional either: all factors are always subject to constant reconsideration in the course of interaction.

Basically the same occurs if S/H indirectly communicates to H/S his/her personal attitude toward the latter by speaking e.g. in an insulting, humiliating or impolite way without this being an element as such of the SoA communicated. The social relationship can still be said to be a relevant SoA to S/H, next to the SoA which the acts are really about. His/her intention with respect to the former is realized by manipulating the conventions related to the social and interpersonal relationship with H/S in very specific ways. Thus, once again this does not change the factors determining the acts by S/H, but only their specific value.

Quite a different type of interaction in which one factor seems to acquire a predominant position over the others is 'phatic communion' (Malinowski 1923) or 'small-talk'. In such situations, it seems that "It is not what is said that matters so much, as that something is said" (Sapir 1933: 16), and one might be inclined to think that the 'social relationship' is dominant here. Again, this is only partly accurate. Small-talk occurs in situations in which individuals who know each other are together without there being an immediate purpose for it. Often this creates a psychological need and/or social pressure to establish or maintain contact, because silence can be felt to be hostile. The purpose is to show that the individuals present remain on good terms (small-talk is unlikely to occur between individuals who are hostile toward each other). Whether small-talk will occur is strongly determined by factors like personality (people strongly differ in 'talkativeness': some never say a word unless they really have to, others never stop talking) and culture (silence certainly does not mean the same everywhere: cf. Basso (1972) and several contributions in Tannen and Saville-Troike (eds., 1985)). Nevertheless, it is true that it is mainly a psycho-social phenomenon.

But this does not change the fact that all factors mentioned above exert their specific influence on the communicative decisions taken by the interlocutors. What we have here is a type of more or less conventionalized setting, the nature of which determines the specific values of the other factors. Only a limited number of SoAs can be topic of the communication (the weather, memories, etc., in any case SoAs which are more or less certain to cause mutual agreement, or at least do not to hold the danger of invoking
dispute or conflict between the interaction partners). The intention is to stay in contact and show a positive attitude. And the social or interpersonal pattern is one of communicative equality, while respecting the norms related to the general societal status of each individual.

In summary, it seems that the four factors presented above are universal determinants of communication, although the discussion has shown that there can be rather complex interactions between them. Human thinking and acting is not a flat one-level phenomenon, but is multidimensional and hierarchical. There are constantly things in an individual's interpreted world which attract his/her attention and keep him/her mentally busy. Since they are in the focus of his/her attention, they motivate actions. Actions have to conform to the series of conditioning factors noted above. Obviously, the things which keep an individual busy will influence the values of the conditioning factors, and it appears that this can happen in quite different ways.

Anyway, the above allows us to answer the remaining question in (7). If language has the role function to allow its user to communicate, it has to fulfil the following organic functions:

(i) An informative function: language allows its user to make explicit the SoA relevant in the communicative situation.\(^{22}\)

(ii) An intentional function: language allows its user to pursue his/her intentions with the relevant SoA.

(iii) A socializing function: language allows its user to conform to the rules and norms existing with respect to the interpersonal and social relationship with the interaction partner.

(iv) A contextualizing function: language allows its user to adapt to the specific characteristics of the setting in which the interaction occurs.

Thus we can complete scheme (7) as follows:

\[
(12) \[ E_{\text{language}} \rightarrow A_{\text{informative}} \] \rightarrow [E_{\text{user}} \rightarrow A_{\text{communication}}]
\]

\[
\begin{aligned}
\text{intentional} \\
\text{socializing} \\
\text{contextualizing}
\end{aligned}
\]

The above factors are all subject to direct control in S/H's decisions in constituting functionally appropriate communicative acts. As noted in 3.1, there is one further element to be taken into account in communication, which has to receive a completely different status, however, viz. the inherent properties of S/H. Each S/H is a unique constellation of
(in part constantly developing) emotional and rational properties (idiosyncratic, socially or culturally determined, and universal ones) determining his/her personality, which is furthermore influenced by external factors determining temporary fluctuations in S/H's psychic situation (intoxication, sleepiness, emotional excitement or disorientation, etc.). Without it being an element in the functionality of linguistic acts this factor unavoidably determines the way the individual controls the 'constitutive' factors in the communication, and the way (s)he proceeds to comply with them in acting. Thus, it determines general properties of human interaction such as the tendency to minimize efforts to reach the goal (the inertia of all behavior), but also the typical but temporarily fluctuating (idiosyncratic, social and cultural) 'style' in which each individual performs his/her acts in order to reach his/her objectives ('marking of the emitter'). The effects of this element are intricately interwoven with the effects of the constitutive factors in S/H's communicative acts. (On individual, social and/or cultural style, see e.g. Bernstein 1971, Labov 1972, Van Dijk 1978, Gumperz 1982, Tannen 1987, and several contributions in Fillmore et al. (eds.) 1979, Gumperz (ed.) 1982.)

The fact that the personality and psychic situation of S/H is not a controlled factor does not mean that it cannot become an element of direct relevance in communication. The simplest case is when it directly becomes the relevant SoA constituting the frame of reference of communicative acts. A more complicated case is the one discussed in 3.1, when S/H attempts to control and manipulate the reflection of the personality factor in his/her behavior. This is comparable to the indirect use of the social relationship to communicate an attitude toward H/S discussed above: the personality becomes a second SoA of relevance to S/H, next to the SoA involved in the frame of reference. In both cases, the circumstance that personality becomes the contents of one of the constitutive factors (the frame of reference) in communication does not make it a constitutive factor in itself, and does not change the fact that personality also remains an uncontrollable factor determining the way S/H communicates about his/her personality.

Of course, if personality and temporary psychic situation are reflected in communicative behavior, this means that although this is not part of the functionality of the behavior, for the receiver it does have a 'psychological meaningfulness'. If we consider the above analysis from the perspective of the receiver, a communicative act can be said to be meaningful in a direct and an indirect way. The direct meaningfulness involves S/H's intention concerning the SoA under consideration. This is what the act toward H/S is all about, and what H/S ought to understand if (s)he is to grasp what S/H is doing. The indirect meaningfulness involves the way S/H applies the rules and norms inherent in the social and interpersonal relationship holding between S/H and H/S, and the personal
characteristics of S/H which find expression in the act. S/H's act normally is not about these things (though the former is a controlled factor), hence they are not of primary importance for H/S's understanding the act. Yet H/S always can and normally will derive information from these factors too, and S/H can consciously exploit this fact, as noted above.

5. ARE THERE OTHER ROLE FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE?

Finally, let's turn to the question whether communication is the sole role function of language (cf. 3.1, 4.1). There are quite some instances of language use in which one can dispute the appropriateness of calling them communicative. This involves the many cases in which linguistic acts are not directed toward other individuals. Chomsky (1975: 53ff) claims that this type of language use, which according to him is at least as frequent as interpersonal language use, cannot be called communicative since it has a decisively different structure. He reproaches Searle (1969, 1972) for nevertheless including these usages under communication, "since the notion 'communication' is now deprived of its essential and interesting character" (Chomsky 1975: 57). Yet, upon closer examination the differences between this 'individualistic' language use and real communicative language use do not appear to be all that fundamental. Though they receive values specific for the particular characteristics of the situation, the same basic factors can be pointed out as determinants for S/H's decisions in forming the linguistic acts (cf. also Firth 1952).

Obviously, the factor of the personality is as relevant in this type of behavior as it is in any other (if alone in determining how much, and on which occasions, 'individualistic' language use will occur).

As to the functional factors, individualistic language use always concerns some SoA currently relevant to S/H, just like communicative language use. And S/H does not start talking about this SoA without reason. (S)he must have some intention with it. Yet, the directionality of this intention is often different from its directionality in communicative language use: it is not directed at another H/S, but at S/H him/herself. This reflexivity implies that the types of intentions involved in talk-to-self can be quite different. E.g., S/H can have problems in understanding some SoA, and can try to get things straight by formulating them and writing them down on paper. This is certainly one of the main intentions behind scientists' making notes while doing research. Another intention behind research notes can be to help memorizing the SoAs involved. Other intentions can be to convince oneself of something, stimulate oneself, etc., or even simply talk about what one is doing or thinking about in order to avoid silence, because one hates silence, or is afraid,
or likes to hear oneself talking, etc. No doubt, the exact intention will have influence on
the construction of the 'talk-to-self acts'.

The 'social relationship' receives a different value in talk-to-self, too. Maybe it is
difficult to use the term 'social' here. Nevertheless, every person has attitudes toward and
opinions about him/herself, and can have changing feelings about him/herself. Some like
oneself, others hate oneself; some feel superior, others inferior; some like who they are,
others would like to be someone else; there are moments in which one is proud of one-
self, detests oneself, is angry at oneself, etc. This relationship with oneself no doubt in-
fluences the way one talks to oneself.

Finally, the setting has its influence as well. Talk-to-self is quite different at home in
the kitchen and in the bus to work. And cursing oneself for having made a mistake will
sound differently in the office amidst colleagues at work and at night in bed.

Actually, individualistic language use does not necessarily have to be purely reflexive.
Individuals very often privately simulate discourse with others. In that case, S/H can
imagine a fictive alter ego, or even an existing person, and start talking as if (s)he were
involved in a real conversation with him/her. E.g., if (s)he is about to make some
important choice, S/H can set up a fictive antagonist holding a different opinion than the
one (s)he is inclined to hold, and start a dialectic communication process discussing the
pros and cons with this antagonist. And one will be talking to an 'imagined real' person
or 'possible' person if one is re-doing a conversation one had before with someone else,
or if one is preparing a speech or talk or anticipating a conversation to be held with
another person in the future. Especially in the latter cases, the different factors discussed
will all have the same type of impact on the linguistic acts by the speaker as in real
conversation, although the fact that the 'addressee' is not really present obviously gives the
speaker much more freedom.

In short, the differences between individualistic and communicative language use do
not appear to be fundamental at all, as far as the basic principles of the process are
concerned. Hence it can only be a matter of terminology if one wants to criticize Searle's
use of the term 'communication' to refer to both 'types' of linguistic behavior. In any case,
the four organic functions which language fulfills in communication remain valid for this
'deviant' use of language as well. They seem to be good candidates for the status of
'universals of language use' or 'pragmatic universals'.

The above discussion also shows that there is nothing wrong with the claim that
language is an instrument for thought, but that it is rather strange that this claim is
considered to be in conflict with the claim that language is an instrument for commu-
nication (e.g. Harman 1975). Language certainly does support thinking, in individualistic
language use as represented above, but also in real communication, to the same degree as communication in itself is an inalienable aspect of human thinking. There is no opposition whatsoever here.
NOTES

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2 This usage occasionally also occurs in biology and the human sciences (cf. Greenberg 1958, Nagel 1961). Moreover, its structure is clearly related to the main usage of the term in the latter sciences to be discussed below. The mathematical usage involves a mainly quantitative dependency relationship between sets of units, which is made explicit by a functional rule. The usage typical of biology and the human sciences also expresses a dependency relationship between entities, but one which cannot be stated in purely quantificational terms, and therefore cannot be formulated in a simple functional rule. (Cf. Nuyts 1988.)

3 Note that the actual manner of formulating these functions can greatly differ, probably depending on the specific constellation of the phenomenon referred to. In most cases, part of scheme (1) is left implicit. E.g., in (2) only \( A_1 \) and \( A_2 \) are mentioned, in (3) \( E_1 \) is not mentioned.

4 This is related to what Greenberg (1958) has called 'activity function', but the present notion is wider than Greenberg's.

5 Though Nagel (1979) is only referring to biological functions, his expositions may be generalized to functions in the human sciences in many respects.

6 By combining these variants, and organic and role functions, it is possible to represent a system as a functional chain or network making explicit its functional organization. The culminating point of the network is always the cluster [organism/system → survival/functioning].

7 Thus, one can have a chain of goals, ultimately ending at the maintenance of the individual, although the distance from the actual linguistic act to this ultimate goal can be very long. In any case, one should not believe that goal-directedness is a simple or inarticulate matter - cf. 3.2.

8 Though speech acts are not normally called 'functions', their relationship with them is apparent if one considers Searle's (1976: 1) initial question, viz. "How many ways of using language are there?" They concern things an individual can do with language.

9 Of course, Jakobson distinguishes more factors in the communicative situation than Bühler. On the relevance of these additional factors for the organic functions, see 3.2.
Halliday (1974a) has tried to show that the theory of 'functional sentence perspective' (FSP) of the Prague school starts from the same set of functions. In fact, FSP distinguishes three 'strata' in the linguistic system, viz. those of the grammatical structure of the sentence, the semantic structure of the sentence, and the organization of the utterance (Danes 1964, and several contributions in Danes 1974). Yet, FSP itself has never related these strata to functions, and the correspondence might not be as evident as Halliday would like it to be. Within the Prague school, there does not appear to be one generally accepted view on the functionality of language. Bühler's typology appears to have been very influential (Horálek 1964, Vachek 1966), but there are also many diverging views. (Cf. Horálek 1964 for a short overview.) Most of them are difficult to access for linguistic reasons, but Horálek's (1964) exposition remains purely programmatic and impressionistic, and focusses exclusively on sub-functions of the poetic function. It is not unlikely that Horálek's (1964: 45) conclusion typifies the situation in the Prague school in general: "Il résulte sans doute assez clairement de cet exposé, qu'une théorie systématique des fonctions de la langue devra encore être faite."

This brings Bühler close to a strong (but biassing) tradition (which persists even today in many semantic theories) to consider reference the most important or even only basic 'activity' of language. Cf. e.g. Dempe (1930).

Busse (1975) provides a survey of other criticisms (often in the same vein) on Bühler's typology.

The core of the problem with Halliday's discussion of functions is precisely the extremely intrinsic approach he advocates. His focus on the linguistic system as such has no doubt distracted his attention from the real question, viz. what language does in communication. And it has led him into a much too simplistic view on the form-function correlation. See Nuyts (1988).

Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 226ff) are right in stressing that one should not exaggerate subjectivism: there still exists a relationship between reality and knowledge, even though its exact shape is not and most probably cannot be known.

This is not to say that reality does not change. I subscribe to Toulmin's (1972) stressing the fundamental historicity and variability of all existing things (human and non-human). Yet, in itself this is a principle valid for all humans, too, and the elements of the changes are identical for all environments. There is always a certain degree of variability and a certain degree of identity, in whatever you consider.

Of course, the more and the larger the differences, the greater the need for communication, but also the harder it becomes. This is basically the problem of social stratification, of intercultural and international communication, etc.
Of course, this characterization has to be interpreted broadly. Orders, e.g., can also be seen as a matter of consensus over an interpretation of reality. Depending on the social relationship between the interaction partners, the one receiving the order will only perform according to it if he agrees with the sender about the appropriateness of the intended change in reality. Even in case the social situation does not allow a refusal to obey an order, e.g. in a military context, communication is a matter of consensus: the one receiving the order is supposed to accept that the view of reality of the one in command is appropriate, and to accept it unconditionally.

This seems to me to be one of the main elements of difference and continuity at the same time, between Wittgenstein (1922) and (1958). Wittgenstein (1922) has been trying to analyze language as a mirror of reality. But which reality? His conclusion that "Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen" (ibidem: 7) seems to signal that he has become aware of the fact that it makes no sense to try and relate language to an objective world: we cannot talk about this world because we cannot know it.

"Meine Sätze erläutern dadurch, daß sie der, welcher mich versteht, am Ende als unsinnig erkennt, wenn er durch sie - auf ihnen - über sie hinaustiegen ist. (Er muß sozusagen die Leiter wegwerfen, nachdem er auf ihr hinaufgestiegen ist.) Er muß diese Sätze überwinden, dann sieht er die Welt richtig." (ibidem: 6.54)

Consequently, Wittgenstein (1958) consistently starts from a subjectivist (but not a solipsist!) perspective in analyzing language. He has thrown his ladder away.

Thus, a complete model of the linguistic capacity of language users must grasp both dimensions, in equal rights. And though it is partially right (but incomplete) to claim that "the production of discourse should be seen as a procedure of understanding" (Parret 1986: 756), it is mistaken to claim "that the concept of discourse production should be shaped on the basis of the model of the concept of understanding" (ibidem), just like the opposite claim would be mistaken.

This implies that at least the often heard criticism on Gricean meaning theory that it involves an endless embedding of intentions within intentions, is inappropriate, for this perfectly corresponds to the factual nature of intentionality.

Actually, this is often true in Western culture as well. An employee can be fired because of a mistake, even though he did not commit it intentionally. A minister can be forced to resign because of mistakes made by his administration, without his intentions having any influence on this.

I prefer to use the term 'informational function' rather than the more often used term 'referential function' because the latter is much too reminiscent of reference to the extra-subjective reality. As discussed above, language always refers to the subject's interpretation of reality in the widest sense of the word (this is true even for deictic elements).
Note that the characterizations of style and of poeticity (cf. 2.2) show a very clear resemblance. Both are matters having to do with or resulting from the way linguistic means are used to achieve goals. This corresponds perfectly to the intuition that both phenomena are closely related, and to the practice in poetics to handle them in a mutual relationship.


Grice, H.P. (1975) Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & J.L. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and


