

EXPLORING THEMATIC DEPTH IN THE SHORT STORY, ‘THE LAST QUESTION’ BY ISSAC ASSIMOV: EMPLOYING LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Human language is essential for communication, which enables the expression of thoughts, prediction, reference, and societal interactions, in order to make it inseparable from communication itself. The purpose of the study is to identify functions of language in Short Story *The Last Question* by Issac Assimov and reveal the thematic depth of the story to engage readers. It further highlights the exemplary contributions of the linguists like Geoffrey Leech, Ludwig Karl Buhler and Michael Halliday to enhance our understanding of literary functions of language. For achieving the aforementioned objectives, the researchers apply Roman Jakobson’s model of language functions to analyze the short story and compare it with previous studies. The findings highlights six functions of language—referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, and poetic—and their role in communication. The study emphasizes how these functions convey information, express emotions, influence behavior, establish connections, clarify language, and enhance aesthetic experience in the narrative. The findings of this research will be helpful for the readers in general to know the functions of language and for the researchers in specific as it will provide insights for further research.

Key words: Language functions, referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, poetic

1. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The primary function of human language is communication. Without language communication is not possible. As Noam Chomsky said that ‘human language is a system for free expression of thoughts (1980). Communication is defined as conveying information from the mind of one interlocuter to the mind of one or two interlocutors. In linguistic reference is made to entities and predictions are made about actions. So speakers make linguistic representations. Take here an example, the child played football in the playground. There are three referring elements in this example. The boy (participant), played (action of the child), football (entity), playground (location where event took place), so fundamental functions of language are reference and predictions. Language is used in social interactions. The existence of humans in this world is identified as existence of communication and communication is not

possible without language. Humans fulfill their needs for their purpose they communicate with each other through language. Humans communicate in groups and different groups leads to speaking of different languages. Every group has its own language called local language. The local language connects all members of that ethnic group to interact with each other. Language and communications are connected with each other and cannot be separated. Through verbal communication humans interact with each other to fulfill their need and this communication is not possible without language. Language and communications are just like two bodies in one frame. Communication refers to transferring of information between a source who conveys information and receiver who receives information in linguistic contexts. (Crystal, 1985). Language is a way to understand and interpret the world language is not only used for communication but it is also used to perform

certain actions. The following are few examples to explain how language perform certain actions. Example 1. Don't get me wrong but I just think we should look at some other options before making a decision.

Language perform the function of disagreeing or expressing other opinions.

Example 2. You have a very soft heart that can feel the pain of every person. Here language serve the function of making compliments because we use language to compliment come one or something.

Example 3. Could you provide me more detail about this topic? This sentence is an example of asking for information which an important characteristics of language.

Example 4. You should focus more on your studies. Here function of language in giving advice is mentioned.

Example 5. I feel incredibly happy and grateful for your support. This sentence shows expressing the feelings and expression of feelings only occur through language.

The Last Question is a thought provoking science fiction short story that explores concept of universe and the ultimate fate and of humans. It was written by Issac Assimov. It first appeared in the November 1956 issue of Science Fiction Quarterly and in the anthologies in the collections Nine Tomorrows (1959). Through different stages of conversations between a supercomputer and different individuals through various stages, the story delves the idea of entropy and the chances to reverse it to prevent the end of the universe. It explores humanity's quest to reverse entropy and to prevent drath of universe. Over billions of years, the narrative follows successive generations of humans who encounting with ultimate decay of matters and energy, who asks the same questions,can entropy be reversed. Every time the supercomputer of every era including multivac microvac, galactic AC, cosmic AC, answers same and insufficient data. In the end as the universe reaches its final stage and humanity is merged with computer, the computer finally got the answers to share with people but ad humanity is no more ,there is no physical body to listen to that answers because all physical bodies are gone and only consciousness mind remains. The cosmic AC develops an answer.Let there be light which shows initiating

a new cycle of creation and effectively reversing entropy.

1.1 Statement of research problems.

The research aims to highlight the various functions of language in Short Story the Last Question by Issac assimov. The goal of the research is to examine the role of language as communicative medium. Understanding the functions and nature of language is necessary for comprehending the meaning individuals ascribe to words. By addressing different types of functions language users are able to differentiate the functions of language and to examine how is language is used as a communicative medium.

1.1) Purpose of the Study

The study of research aims to understand how language as a tool for communication and social interactions. By examining the different functions of language in different contexts, researcher can understand how language conveys information and facilitate human connections. This understanding also helps educators and teachers to provide more effective methods of language teaching.

1.2) Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is to highlight different functions of language in Short Story. The Last Question by Issac assimov. Each function of language serve a different purpose in process of communication as language is used to convey information, for order, commands, requests, maintaining social connections, discussing language itself, and to focus on a esthetic qualities. This model provides an understanding about language as a medium to communicate. The study has significance as it highlights all the essential functions of language that is the referential function, the Emotive function, the connative function, the metalingual function , the poetic function and the phatic function. Identification of these functions is necessary as it clearly provide the context in which language is used as a medium of communication. Roman Jakobson (1960), model clearly explains all functions of language which is used in expressing feelings, emotions, desires, requests, orders, commands, aesthetic qualities, to share information, to make

connections and to talk about language itself. As language is a communicative medium and is used for interactions therefore the study is important to reveal the different functions of language and highlight the importance of each function.

1.3) Research Objectives

The study aims to attain the following research objectives

To highlight different functions of language

To shed light on how language is used for communication

To examine different theories related to functions of language

1.4) Research Questions

- What are different functions of language?
- How language is used as a medium for communication?
- What are different theories related to functions of language

Literature Review

Review is a systematic way of collecting and synthesizing previous researches. (Baumeister and Leary 1997). It provides an overview of areas under study. According to Webster and Watson (2002) a literature review is an effective and well conducted review as a research method that creates a firm foundation for Literature enhancing knowledge and facilitating theory development. This chapter includes the literature review covering all aspects of language and its functions.

Language is a rule governed system for communication. Millward and Hayes (2012), defines language as a systematic and conventional means of human communication by way of vocal sounds. There are approximately 7,000 different languages that differ in word, pronunciation sentence structure, but all languages share a common purpose that is to communicate with each other so basically communication is the primary function of language.

According to Person and Nelson (2000). Communication is defined as the process of comprehending and sharing of meanings. Breaking the terms in this definition are as

follows, process never remains the same, understanding is the key concept which means to perceive and to interpret what we already know (McLean 2003). Sharing means doing something with people and meaning is what we share through communication. Weekley (1976) defined communication as to share. According to McLean (2005), there are eight important components in communication. The Source is the sender who sends messages, the message is the idea or meaning shared, the receiver is the one who receives messages, channel is the way in which a message travel between source and receiver, feedback is responding to source. As the amount of feedback increases the accuracy of communication also increases (Leavitt and Mueller 1951). Environment is the atmosphere and context is the setting, scenes where communication takes place. The same components of communication are defined according to Roman Jakobson as addresser is the person who delivers message to audience, addressee is the audience that receives message, context involves the setting, contact is the connection between addresser and addressee, common code is the rule that combine to make message or idea and message is the idea sent by addresser and received by addressee.

Language is defined as arbitrary, productive, dynamic and diversified and sign of sound system (Chaer 1995:14) The relationship between Language symbol and its meaning is established by social agreement or social convention between users of language in a society. (Chaer and Augustine 2004). Ferdinand de Saussure has mentioned that language is a product of social agreement between speakers of language. According to (Karaf 1997) language is used as a tool for self expression as a mean to communicate as a tool to organize and adopt to social integration in the environment and a tool for social control – chaer and Augustine (2004) has maintained that participants in the communication with language can communicate to each other.

Michael Halliday (1996) has classified 7 function of language known as macro functions mentioned as follows,

- Instrumental function is the function used to manipulate the environment that led to particular structure.

- Regulatory function serves to control an event
- Representational function serves as to make a statement present the facts.
- Interactional function maintain relationships to keep communication running.
- Heuristic function is used to acquire knowledge in order to recognize the environment.
- Personal function used to express feelings emotions.
- Imaginative function serves to create imaginative ideas.

Gut Cook in Pranowo(1984) has mentioned macro functions. The emotive function used to express emotions feeling. Great oh!. The Directive function used for making order requests for example help him please. The Phatic function is when the speaker going to start a conversation. The Referential function used to convey information. The Poetic function is used to add essence to the meaning. The Contextual function is used to create different types of communication for example Good ! Let's do our homework. While micro fun used the communicative forms of each category of macro function.

The vital function of language is to share thoughts and ideas and is used as representation of thoughts. Our thinking process is dependent upon concepts and concepts are tied to language. Language has greater influence on minds of individuals and how they view and think about the world because thinking process is directly correlated to language and shapes reality. The language system shapes the thi king of it's speakers. (W. V. Humboldt 1767. 1835). The Sapir – Whorf hypothesis also known as “Linguistic Relativity Hypotheses “ presented by Edward Sapir and his student Whorf which proclaimed the influence of language on thoughts and perceptions.

They mentioned clearly in their book that Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood , but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an

incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the „real world“ is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group...We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.” (Sapir, 1929b, P.207).

They believe that language shapes our thoughts and ideas. Moreover language shapes attitudes in people in the same way as it shapes ideas thus people who speaks different languages must think differently about the world. Different linguistics emphasis leads to different linguistics thinking. (Gipper 1979).

Gary's karaf (1997) defined language as a sign of sound created by speech organs that is used by members of community to communicate. The level of education is reflected in a person's language because an educated person would be easily understood than an uneducated one. Through language a person can reflect on his position in society language ability and power dynamics that so along with it can amplify disparities and strength social hierarchies (Penny Cook 2007). If a leader can speak well the he can express his ideas in clear and straightforward that shows the authority of that leader because power relationship between people can be expressed through language. According to J. J Baradac(1993), language can be used as an instrument to influence people or gain control because language provide a conversational tool for power. In 1984 a book by George Orwell the governing party uses language manipulation to quell opposition and retain its power.

The common ground theory presented by Herbert Clark (1985)states that for a meaningful conversation and for the participants to be understood, the sharing of knowledge is very necessary (Clark, 1985). The collaborative function of language refers to the way the speaker and listener work together to construct meaning and have mutual understanding which means that conversation requires both speaker and listener. Key aspects include common ground (shared knowledge, beliefs) , coordination(using language to maintain conversation), repair mechanism(strategies to correct misunderstanding. 2) The interactive function of

language involves the real time exchange between speaker and listener. Key aspects are turn taking (manner in which speaker and listener change speaking), feedback(immediate response from listener) and contextual cues (the non verbal signals that influence interpretation of language.

John Searle (1977) presented the theory of speech acts which states that language is not only used for communication but it also perform certain actions and this performing of action is the communicative function of language. According to him there are five functions of language.1)the assertive function shows statements, explanation, description..3) the directive function shows orders, commands and requests.3) the commissives function shows promises ,contracts and guarantees.4) the expressive function shows apologies , thanks , congratulations and welcomes. 6) the declarative function shows as an aspect of speech where a statement describes a state of affairs of reality for example when a judge says “I hereby pronounce you husband and wife “, the marriage is brought about by the statement itself . To sum up the above definitions an assertive is always an expression of belief. Every directive expresses the desire of speaker that the hearer should do the actions directed to him. Every commissives is an expression of an interaction to do something. Expressive involves expression of feelings of apologies, congratulation someone etc. Declarative changes the state of affairs in the world (Searle 1999).

Geoffery Leech(1974) mentioned that language has five functions. 1) the information function used to give new information and concentrates on the message.2) the expressive function focuses on speaker’s personal perspective and emotional state.3) the directive function , language is used to influence the behaviour and actions of others. It includes commands, requests and suggestions.4) the aesthetic function, it prioritize beauty,style and artistic expression.5) the phatic function , language is used to establish and maintain social relationship. The phatic function refers to the use of language to establish maintain or terminate social relationships rather than to convey information or to ask for action.it incudes small talks , greetings or social exchange that helps to create a sense of social connection.

Brownislaw Malinowsky (1915) said that the principle function of language is to construct a social identity of an individual. A common language may be the ideal vehicle to express the unique character of a social group and to encourage common social ties on the basis of common identity. Dieckoff (2004). The mother tongue is said to be particularly important aspect of ethnic identity since both are frequently viewed and being unheated from birth. Fishman(1991). Many dialects, accents, slang, jargon can identify someone as part of a specific region . for example someone speaking with the southern, American accent can be identified ad being from the Southern united states. So language can identify members in a particular social group. Tajfel (1978), defines Social identity is the part of a person’s self-concept that comes from their knowledge and social group membership. Language both shapes and reflects the identities of people and groups. Many sociolinguists behaves that language varies across different social groups based in factors like region , class, ethnicity, gender , and age. These variation such as dialects and sociolects help in constructing social identity of a individual.The field of sociolinguistics has mostly focused on issues related to language and identity. (Rampton,1995,Harris,2026).

Language is a tool for empowering oneself and for self expression (Cameron,1995). William labov (1972) has claimed that the dominant group maintain its supremacy and sustains social I equality by marginalizing and demeaning some groups via. Language is used as a tool in shaping individual’s identity. The way people communicate with each other is largely influenced by language. Moreover Woolard (1989) said that language has a role in formation of social identities and group dynamics since it may either promote a sense of belonging or exclude people. Language can both narrow and increase cultural gaps, which has a significant impact on social inclusion and integration.(Lippi-Green,2012).

Karl Ludwig Buhler presented the Organon Model of communication in which he mentioned three functions of language. The expressive function which conveys emotions, attitude of speaker. The connative function also known as the appealing function influences the behavior of

listener. The Representation function of language is used to convey information. According to Paul Gee (1991), many people think that the primary purpose of human language is to communicate information.

2. Research Methodology

According to Redman and Moray(1923), research is a systematic attempt to gain new comprehension. Methodology is the theoretical examination of the methods that are necessary in all fields of study. Its aim is to examine the methods. Research problem is explained systematically through methodology by adapting various steps

3.1 Nature of Research

The nature of research is qualitative in nature with descriptive approach. Qualitative-research is also known as “Motivation Research “. Qualitative-research is the study of nature of phenomena which includes quality, different manifestations, the context in which they appear and the perspective from which they are perceived. (Philipsen and Vernooij – Dassen 2007). Qualitative research typically includes data in the form of words instead of numbers (Punch 2013). Qualitative-research analyzes non numerical data such as text, video or audio and is used to understand how individuals perceive their surroundings (Bhandari 2022). Qualitative research involves observing the population and conducting in – depth interviews or focus group discussions (Corner et al. 2019). It helps to understand the complex reality of situations. Soratoo et al. (2019) has mentioned that the very fabric of qualitative research is the utilization of open – ended questions whose answers are not easily measured so better explained through qualitative research. Further Moser and Korstjens (2018) has mentioned that it explains all how and why questions rather than how much or how many questions. The data collected does not require quantification.

Advantages of using qualitative method in Research.

They are more flexible and answers how and why questions. The relationship between participants and researcher is less general. Participants can answer in greater detail. It provides deeper insight

into real world issues and problems. (Corner et al. 2019). It mostly focus on words meanings and their analysis.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

The researcher has gained data from articles and journals in the following steps.

Reading of short story The Last Question by Isaac Asimov. Understanding the meanings of words in Short Story. Reading and understanding of Roman Jakobson Model of Functions of Language. Comprehending each Function of language and how they are used in the text. Identifying and analyzing all functions of language in Short Story the Last Question by Isaac Asimov.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

The researcher used Roman Jakobson(1960), Model of Functions of Language because it explains all functions in better and clear way. Furthermore Roman Jakobson Functions of Language explains the communicative function of language in better way which is the major and primary function of language.

Analysis and Discussions

Overview.

The writer used the sentences that highlight functions of language. The writer also explains models of communication that are related to all functions of language. The writer compares it to previous researches that explained all functions of language used in communication. In this analysis the writer applied Roman Jakobson theory of Language, the well-known model of the functions of language introduced by the Russian-American linguist, Roman Jakobson (1960), includes 6 elements of communication and 6 main functions of language including the representational, emotive, connotative, phatic, metalingual and poetic function of language. There are six important factors that are necessary in communication according to Roman Jakobson.

Addresser: This is the person who delivers a message to a specific audience.

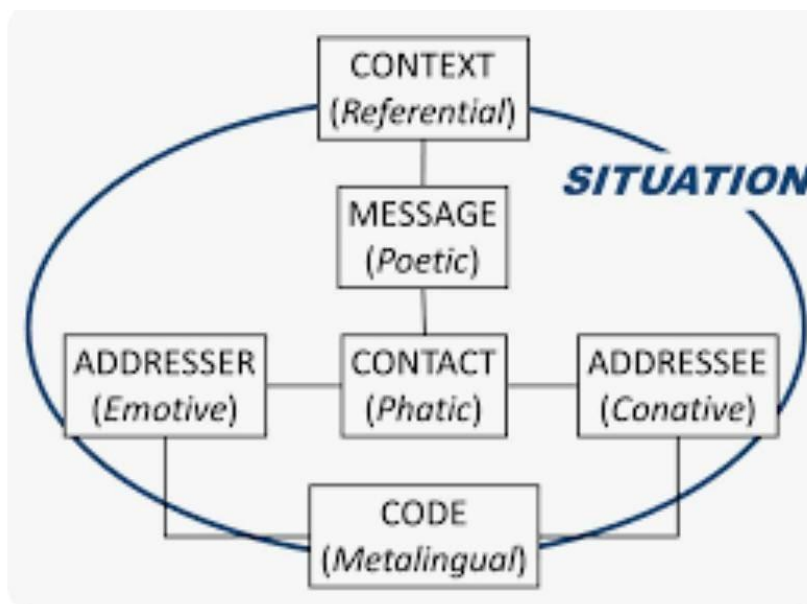
Addressee: This is the audience that receives the message.

Context: The context forms the setting or the reason for the message that will be communicated.

Contact: There needs to be a relational channel and connection between the addresser and the addressee.

Common code: The code includes the rules that combine to form the message and correspond to the type of language used.

Message: The message is what is sent by the addresser and corresponds to an experience explanation.



Functions of Language in communication according to Roman Jakobson in Short Story The Last Question by Issac asimov.

01. THE Referential Function of Language.

The function of language used to share information. It focus on the content of information being conveyed. Karl Buhlar (1990) states that the referential function of language also called the Representational function of language , is used to convey information about objects and states of affairs in the world. It allows speakers to describe, report, and communicate facts and ideas.

Examples of sentences including Referential Function of Language.

The last question was asked for the first time, half in jest, on May 21, 2061, at a time when humanity first stepped into the light. The stars and galaxies died and snuffed out, and space grew black after ten trillion years of running down. It was on May 21, 2061, that the world first came to know of the Multivac. Jerrodd, Jerrodine, and Jerrodetette I and

II watched the starry picture in the visiplat change as the passage through hyperspace was completed. Entropy, little by little, was increasing in the Universe. The Galactic AC, the successor to Multivac, was a giant cube half a mile along each edge. For a while, mankind in its youth gathered its toys and played with them. Each star and galaxy poured out its endowment of radiant energy, and there was no compensation. It is not given to all life to be immortal, but to Multivac it is. For a while, stars and galaxies changed in a swirl of meaningless color. But there came a day when ten trillion years of running down took its toll.

These sentences shows the referential function of language which focuses on describing and conveying factual information about the world. It is used to refer to things, events, and states of affairs. This function relies heavily on the context in which communication occurs. Understanding the referential function often requires knowledge of the situation or background information being referred to. The referential function aims to be objective and factual, rather than expressing personal emotions or attitudes. It seeks to provide

an accurate representation of reality. This function deals with the denotative meaning of words and sentences, which is the literal, dictionary definition of terms used to refer to specific objects and the referential function is key in transferring knowledge or information from the speaker to the listener. It is fundamental in educational, informational, and descriptive communication.

02. The Emotive Function of Language

It is also called expressive function, this function helps us to interpret emotions, feelings, desires, and moods of the subject.

Example of sentences including Expressive function of language.

"You're thinking we'll fall apart tomorrow." – it reflects anxiety and concern that all people will die and there will be no one. "Hell, no!" – It expresses strong emotion and disagreement. "I'm scared." – it is direct expression of fear. "Don't ask me to make a decision like that." – Shows hesitation and uneasiness about taking decisions. "I don't want to live in a world where the stars are going out." – it expresses despair and hopelessness. "I'm tired of all this." – it conveys fatigue and frustration. "I feel like we're at the end of everything." – it reflects a sense of impending doom that everything will be finished. "I'm amazed at how much we've achieved." – it shows wonder and pride. "I don't understand how this is possible." – Expresses confusion and disbelief. "I'm so glad you're here with me." – Conveys gratitude and relief.

The emotive function centers on the speaker's emotional state or personal attitude towards the subject matter. It aims to convey how the speaker feels, rather than merely providing information. This function is subjective and personal, reflecting the speaker's internal emotional experiences or reactions rather than an objective account of facts. It focuses on the speaker's state of mind and feelings. It often relies on tone, intonation, and emphasis to convey emotional undertones.

03) Conative Function of Language.

This function influences the behavior of receiver to do something. It includes orders, requests, commands. Karl Bühler (1990) states that the conative function of language is also called the

Appellative or Appealing function of language which focuses on influencing the listener's behavior or response. It includes commands, requests, and other forms of language aimed at prompting action or reaction from the addressee.

Example of Sentences including Conative Function of Language.

"Don't you dare!" – It is a direct command. "Ask Multivac," he said. – A suggestion or directive to seek information. "You do it," said Adell. – A command directed to perform an action. "Make it run," Adell said. – An instruction or request to start a process. "Ask Multivac when we can stop worrying about the Sun," said Lupov. – A directive to find out information. "Don't worry," said Adell. – A reassurance meant to influence the listener's emotions. "Ask Multivac again." – A command to repeat an action. "Try it now," said Adell. – A directive to perform an action immediately. "Let's see what Multivac says," said Adell. – A suggestion to consult Multivac. "Have you asked Multivac?" – A question implying the need for a specific action.

Roman Jakobson's (1960), conative function of language primarily focuses on the recipient of the message and aims to influence or persuade them. It includes the use of language to direct, command, or appeal to the listener or reader, aiming to elicit a specific response or action. It involves the explicit address of the audience through imperatives, requests, or exhortations, often employing a direct and engaging tone. This function is integral in persuasive communication, advertising, and any context where the speaker's goal is to affect the behavior or attitudes of others.

04) The Phatic Function of Language.

The phatic function is used to establish connection between speaker and listener. It is related to social interactions.

Example of Sentences including Phatic Function of Language.

"Hello, AC, can we help you?" "Do you hear me, AC?" "Are you there, AC?" He is confirming the presence of the listener that is AC. "AC, are you listening?" "Can you understand us, AC?" Hello, Adell." – Greeting to initiate interaction. "What's the matter?" – Expressing concern and encouraging further communication. "How are

you?” – Standard inquiry about well-being. “It’s been a long time, hasn’t it?” – Maintaining the flow of conversation. “Well, what do you think?” – Inviting the listener to share their thoughts. “Do you understand what I’m saying?” – Ensuring comprehension and engagement. “Let’s see now...” – Keeping the conversation going while thinking. “Is everything okay?” – Checking on the listener’s state. “Do you follow me?” – Ensuring that the listener is keeping up with the conversation. “Right?” – Seeking confirmation or agreement. “Well, anyway...” – Transitioning within the conversation. “You know what I mean?” – Making sure the listener understands. “Can we talk about this?”

The phatic function of language is primarily concerned with establishing, maintaining, or closing communication channels between interlocutors. It focuses on the social aspect of language, ensuring that the contact between speaker and listener is functioning effectively. It is essential for creating a connection, checking the adequacy of the communication process, and reinforcing social bonds. This function emphasizes the role of language in fostering interaction rather than transmitting content.

05) The Poetic Function Of Language

This one is also known as the aesthetic function of language. It primarily focus on aesthetic qualities, form and structure of language This means that the message might be embellished with rhetorical figures of speech or “flowery” language.

Example of Sentences including Poetic Function of Language.

For one last time he turned back to look at the stars.” – Evocative imagery for looking at the stars. “The stars were few and faint, and they were far away, almost lost in the eternal night.” – Descriptive and rhythmic scene describing situations of the stars. “They glittered like diamonds in the black velvet of the sky.” – The sentence shows Similie which is defined as a figure of speech that is used to compare things with the use of words ‘like ‘ or ‘as’. So here like the diamond is the Similie. “Silence fell again, as thick and heavy as a velvet curtain.” – As a velvet is a Similie here used for comparison. “The stars dimmed and faded, and the blackness took over.”

“The universe died and went out like a candle.” – Simile and dramatic imagery which is the poetic quality of any literary piece of work highlighted through language. “Darkness lay upon the face of the deep.” “For the first time, there was a single, tiny spark of light in the vast expanse of nothingness.” The spark glowed and grew, and became a brilliant point of light.

The poetic function of language, as proposed by Roman Jakobson, emphasizes the aesthetic and expressive qualities of communication. It focuses on the form and structure of the message itself, rather than just the content or the referential aspect. This function highlights the use of rhythm, sound patterns, metaphors, and other stylistic elements to evoke emotions, create imagery, and engage the reader’s or listener’s senses. By foregrounding the formal aspects of language, the poetic function transforms ordinary communication into an artistic experience, inviting deeper reflection and interpretation.

06) The Metalingual function of Language.

Meta is basically defined as self-awareness and refer to talking about language itself.

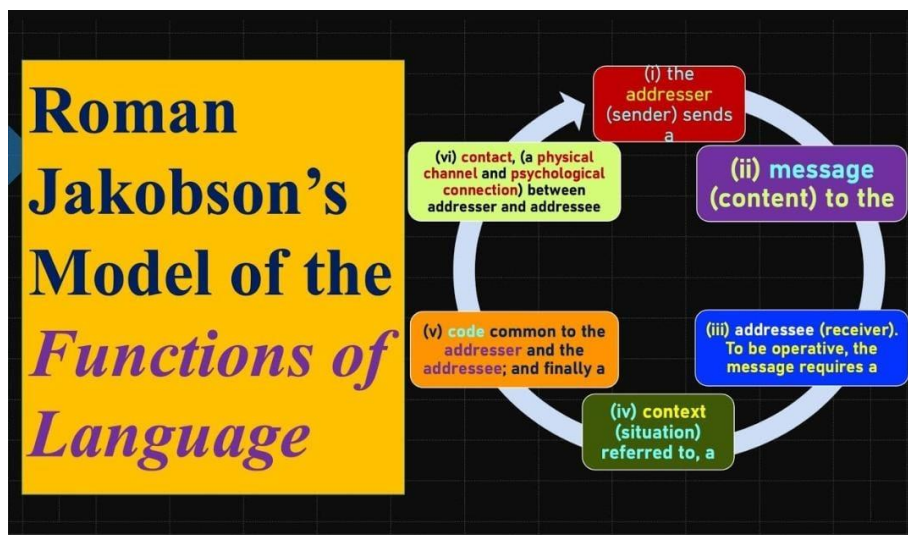
Example of Sentences including Metalingual Function of Language.

What is entropy?” – Clarifying the meaning of a term. “Explain to me what you mean by ‘running down’.” – Requesting a clarification of a phrase. “What do you mean by ‘computing’?” – Asking for an explanation of a concept. “Define ‘cosmic AC’.” – Asking for the definition of a term. “What do you mean by ‘data inadequate’?” – Requesting an explanation of a phrase. “Does ‘irreversible’ mean we can’t fix it?” – Clarifying the implications of a term. “What does it mean when you say ‘stars die’?” – Seeking an explanation of a statement. “When you say ‘energy will all be gone’, what does that entail?” – Asking for clarification of a concept. “By ‘universe collapses’, do you mean everything?” – Requesting a detailed explanation. “What exactly is ‘heat death’?” – Seeking a precise definition of a term.

Roman Jakobson’s (1960), concept of the metalingual function of language focuses on communication about the language itself. This

function is characterized by its role in clarifying or defining terms and concepts within the conversation, thus ensuring that both the sender and receiver understand the same meanings. It operates through explicit explanations, definitions, or clarifications, which help to

resolve ambiguities and misunderstandings. Essentially, the metalingual function serves to check and adjust the code of communication to make sure that it is used correctly, fostering clear and effective dialogue.



Discussion

Based on the above analysis in topic functions of language according to Roman Jakobson in *Short Story The Last Question* by Isaac Asimov, the referential function of language focuses on conveying information about the world. It is concerned with the context and factual content of the message. This function is predominant in scientific and descriptive discourse. It aims to provide clear and objective data to the receiver. The metalingual function is used to discuss or clarify the code or language itself. It helps to ensure that the sender and receiver understand the terms and structure of the message. This function is crucial in grammar explanations and language teaching. For example, when someone asks, "What do you mean by 'entropy'?" they are using the metalingual function. It aids in resolving ambiguities and enhancing mutual comprehension. The poetic function emphasizes the aesthetic qualities of language. It is concerned with the form and beauty of the message, often seen in literature and poetry. This function draws attention to the way words are used and arranged. It seeks to evoke emotions and create a pleasing linguistic experience. The phatic function is used to establish, maintain, or terminate

communication. It involves social pleasantries and small talk that do not necessarily convey significant information. This function is important in initiating and sustaining interpersonal connections. Examples include greetings like "Hello" and "How are you?" and farewells like "Goodbye." It helps to create a sense of social bonding and rapport between communicators. The conative function is directed towards influencing the behavior or response of the receiver. It is often seen in commands, requests, and persuasive language. This function is predominant in advertisements, political speeches, and instructions. It aims to elicit a specific action or reaction from the listener. The expressive function focuses on conveying the speaker's emotions, attitudes, and feelings. It is also known as the emotive function and is centered on the sender of the message. This function is evident in exclamations, interjections, and emotive language. It aims to express the speaker's personal experience and emotional state.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Conclusion

Roman Jakobson's functions of language provide a valuable lens through which to analyze Isaac Asimov's short story "The Last Question." The referential function is evident as the narrative explores themes of technology, entropy, and the future of humanity, presenting these concepts through a detailed, thought-provoking storyline. The emotive function is prominent in the characters' existential despair and hope, reflecting Asimov's own philosophical inquiries into human progress and cosmic fate. The conative function emerges in the story's ability to engage readers, challenging them to ponder profound questions about the universe and our place within it. Additionally, the phatic function appears in the ongoing dialogue between the characters and the reader, maintaining a connection that deepens the thematic impact of the story. The metalingual function is subtly woven into the narrative as it reflects on the nature of storytelling and scientific exploration, while the poetic function is demonstrated through Asimov's meticulous use of language to create a poignant and aesthetically rich experience.

Furthermore, many famous linguists and scholars have made their significant contributions in describing functions of language including Michael Halliday (1996:) 7 function of language named as instrumental, regulatory, representational, interactional, heuristic, personal, imaginative function of language and Geoffrey Leech(1974) functions of language classified as that language has five functions, the informative function, the expressive function, the directive function, the aesthetic function and the phatic function of language, Ludwig Karl Buhler model of language explaining the expressive, conative and representational functions of language and works of some other scholars including Chaer and Augustine, Herbert Clark, John Searle, Gary's Kerf, Brownislaw Malanowsky who have made significant contributions in presenting theories and models about functions of language.

Overall the study provides insight into the functions of language in sentences. Applying Jakobson's functions(1970), of language to "The Last Question" reveals how each function contributes to the story's thematic depth and

narrative structure. By examining these functions, it becomes clear that Jakobson's theoretical framework not only illuminates the intricate design of "The Last Question" but also demonstrates how literary analysis can reveal deeper meanings in science fiction narratives.

Future Recommendations and Suggestions

The researcher has made some recommendations and suggestions for future researchers based on the conclusion of the study.

Firstly, Roman Jakobson's(1960) functions of language, encompassing the referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, and poetic functions, can be also be effectively applied to the analysis of novels, dramas, and other literary works. These functions offer a comprehensive framework to understand how language operates within literature to create meaning, evoke emotions, and engage readers.

Secondly, by applying Jakobson's functions(1960), readers and critics can gain deeper insights into the multifaceted ways language operates within literary works, enhancing their appreciation and interpretation, therefore the readers and English students are recommended to study any other literary piece of work including any novel, drama, story etc and identify all functions of language according to Roman Jakobson (1960).

Finally, the readers can read any other theory of language or any other linguistics model of communication and can apply it on Short Story The Last Question by Isaac Asimov or can apply it on any novel, drama or story.

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