3 Theory of Verbal Communication

It has been suggested that since verbal communication (i.e., using human language to represent the world and pass on information) can be seen as a subsystem of a larger system of human communication, it therefore exhibits all features of an *open communication system* (cf. Katz and Kahn 1966). The following characteristics provide an insight into the nature of ´the speechmaking system´ from this perspective (cf. Ross 1989):
a) *importation of energy from outside the system* is achieved esp. through the goal (intention, purpose) of communication which provide the system with ´energy´,
b) *throughput* means that verbal communication proceeds through coordinated activity of various subsystems involved (conceptualization, verbalization, articulation, perception, interpretation, etc.),
c) *output* is manifested by, e.g., achievement of an intended goal,
d) *systems as cycles of events* – verbal communication is a continuous process as it involves recurring patterns of activities,
e) *entropy* is a tendency towards degeneration of order existing within systems (e.g., when the perspective of a communicative goal is lost, verbal communication may easily lead to a breakdown),
f) *steady state and dynamic homeostasis* represents an effort which, contrary to entropy, attempts to preserve balance within the language system and integrity of the communication process as well as to avoid communication failure,
g) *negative feedback* means that partners reciprocally monitor their reactions and accordingly adjust their communicative behaviour,
h) *differentiation* stands for the development and refinement of various components (e.g., skills) during the process of continuous communication,
i) *equifinality* - similar communicative effects can be arrived at in different ways. It is especially this feature which, by stressing the presence of an amount of latitude (optionality) in achieving communicative goals, is of direct relevance to the study of style.

Verbal communication is, however, characterized by some unique features which radically set it apart from other types of communication (e.g., in technical systems or among animals): a) its principal function is to transfer information which, besides being factual (i.e., what happened where to whom in what circumstances), may also be of a specific human character (e.g., whether an individual is taken as a valued, respected or ignored member of a speech community) and may also convey emotions, attitudes, beliefs, hopes, desires, etc., b) human language makes predominant use of symbolic signs (symbols) which bear arbitrary relationships to their referents, although iconic and indexical (symptoms) signs and signals are employed as well (see 11.2), c) it takes place in social environments which define particular communicative situations - their relevant features have limiting effects on all aspects of communicative events (and, conversely, communication in progress itself co-builds context in which it takes place).

3.1 *Model of Verbal Communication*

The model of verbal communication includes the following components: a) information (message), b) communication means, c) communication network, and d) communication activity (cf. Sabol and Ondruš 1981, Dolník and Bajzíková 1998, Hoffmannová 1997).

3.1.1 *Information*. Message is converted into a code (language) by a sender and transferred as a discourse (text) via a particular channel to a receiver. Although it is commonly the main stimulus to initiate an act of communication, humans more often than not interact without any clearly defined and/or preplanned message or purpose, esp. in casual meetings (e.g., congratulating, condoling, expressing gratitude). In many such stereotypical situations, certain aspects of contact (appearance, initial reactions, acceptance/rejection) rule over content and interlocutors, in order to liberate themselves from the strain of the situation, select from the stock of some ready-made prefabricated formulae, such as greetings, congratulations, condolences, apologies, thanks, etc..

Various types of message correlate with certain features of the structure of communicative events, codes, channels and textual properties. For example, messages with high information density (research articles, monographs, statutes) utilizing elaborate language are printed out (journals, statute books) and stored in libraries for future reference. In contrast, messages with relatively low information density (mundane conversations or casual narratives) invite the use of spoken verbal code along with some non-verbal codes (gestures). Being produced in elusive, transitory conditions, such conversational encounters are short-lived; their existence is ephemeral and does not allow for written fixation (though their transcripts may be used in judicial proceedings as evidence). Structurally speaking, conversations are no less structured than writing; their structural complexity is, however, of a different kind (see 4.2.1). Urgent messages (e.g., yelling for help) tend to be short, forceful and effective. On the other hand, formal refusals or declinations (e.g., refusal of an application) have elaborate written structure as they carry out the unpreferred second of an adjacency pair (the socially preferred option here is acceptance, see also Preference Organisation, 8.2).

3.1.2 *Communication means* are represented by code and signal (medium). By code we understand a sign system capable of translating between two signal systems. The dominant (primary) code in verbal communication is the **natural language**, i.e., the system of language signs (arbitrary symbols) as well as of grammatical and pragmatic rules of their use.

Besides language, verbal communication utilizes also non-linguistic sign systems - these symbolic codes may be used in a way parallel to language (e.g., reinforcing gestures, such as using fingers when counting), or they may entirely replace language (e.g., using the index finger to point at things); some of them are capable of being used as codes in their own right (e.g., using body language in a noisy setting). Besides, certain features of **paralanguage** (e.g., eye gaze, head nod, leaning forward) is instrumental in organizing the mechanism of turn distribution in face-to-face encounters (see Turn-taking in 8.1).

Non-linguistic codes may be divided into *visual* (static: colour, graphics; dynamic: gestures, facial expressions, posture, proxemics, kinesics) and *non-visual*; the latter can be further subdivided into *non-acoustic* (taste, haptics, smell) and *acoustic*, which may either be *non-vocal* (body noise: clapping; instrumental: drums, whistle) or *vocal* (paralinguistic: vocal quality, hoarseness, laughter, loudness, tempo; prosodic/suprasegmental: intonation, stress, tempo, rhythm, etc.). These codes send concomitant signals accompanying actual words; these two systems may either work together and strengthen the intended meaning or they may conflict with one another and distort it. It should also be stressed that possibilities of the representation of the prosodic features in writing are quite limited (see 4.2).

There is no unanimous agreement among analysts as to what resources help constitute non-linguistic, paralinguistic or even **extralinguistic** (e.g., *lag*, *re-take*, *overlap time*, *turn length*, cf. Mistrík 1990) means of communication. The repertoire of these expressive means with limited

possibilities of representation in writing (esp. through punctuation, capitalization, italics, parentheses) is extremely varied and is subject to cultural variation. In the era of renewed interest in rhetoric, they have been increasingly studied since they present effective means of ideological, political and commercial persuasion. The selection of identical code is an important prerequisite of communicative success (see also Code switching, 9.3).

By **signal** we mean physical properties (esp. air waves or electromagnetic radiation) which are perceptible by senses (esp. by hearing and sight, but also touch, smell or even taste) and whose variation conveys information (message).

3.1.3 *Communication Network* (sender/encoder, receiver/decoder, channel)

As to the link between the two parties of verbal communication, a finer distinction is often made between **medium** (i.e., a way in which a message is conveyed) and **channel** (i.e., a path along which a message is sent). Medium is typically associated with the used verbal (oral or written) material, while channel represents a type of physical connection between communicants (e.g., air vibration, electromagnetic waves, touching, smelling, tasting). Channel determines the type of **contact** between the participants: direct (*face-to-face conversation*) or mediated (cell phone, electronic mail, etc.), monological or dialogical (*dyadic* or *polylogical* communication depending on whether two/more than two interlocutors are involved).

The choice of medium has an imprint upon various aspects of communication, and, conversely, various communicative goals predefine the choice of medium and/or channel. Thus, in a situation where communicants are facing each other (i.e., dyadic communication), resources of spoken language are transferred by air in the shared physical setting; in fact, it is the entire human body which may serve as a channel to convey messages (gestures, but also tactile, olfactory or taste signals). To span the distance between interlocutors, the written medium along with various systems of writing was contrived whereby messages are sent over a variety of channels (paper sheets, book pages, building walls, electronically by computer screens or mobile phone displays, etc.). The advent of electronic media (telegraph, telephone, radio, television, internet), designed to overcome the tyranny of the now-and-here, has radically shifted patterns of human communication (and, accordingly, altered the evolution of entire societies and civilisations); as they expanded to new environments, they created new communicative needs, new types of messages and new types of codes. For example, one of the most recent and widespread innovations is sending short text messages (SMS) via mobile phones; as the medium restricts the number of characters used to 160, users have developed a special code which economises the message by various techniques, e.g., by removing vowels or replacing words with symbols (*c u l8tr m8 = see you later mate*). The new technologies of communication can be considered as complex media (see also 14).

It is useful to realise that a message often passes through several channels before it reaches the receiver; thus, a politician´s statement may first have a form of a written script before it is read out to the journalists at a press conference, then it may be (audio- and/or video-) recorded, transcribed, printed again and distributed to wider audiences.

Other components of a speech situation which are often included in the communication network (cf. Čermák 2001, O´Grady et al. 1997) are the *context*, *noise*, *feedback* and *pragmatic effect*.

Context represents a set of circumstances surrounding a particular speech event: immediate linguistic/intratextual situation (*co-text*), relationships of a speech event with other similar events (*intertext*), immediate components of the setting (*situational context*), broader societal and cultural situation (*macrocontext*) (cf. Hoffmannová 1997), knowledge and experience (*pragmatic*

context, cf. Tárnyiková 1985). Depending on the degree to which context is vital for the production/interpretation of texts, we talk about various degrees of (in)explicitness: explicit texts (e.g., business contracts) are unequivocal – they fully and clearly express given matters and leave little implied, while inexplicit (implicit) texts (e.g., conversation between lifelong friends or spouses) tend to imply things rather than overtly state them - they leave much unstated as the missing links between various pieces of information omitted by ellipsis (5.1) can be filled in by the context.

Noise is a disturbance which interferes with the transmission of a message; it may range between, e.g., faulty connection line when telephoning, and indirectness, semantic ambiguity, irony, humour, punning, etc. To compensate for the loss of information in the transmitted signal (i.e., Entropy, 3) and ensure understanding, some degree of **redundancy** (i.e., inclusion of more information than necessary) is built into utterances.

Feedback is a reaction or response that a sender obtains from a receiver; it provides information about success or failure of communication and accordingly enables a sender to monitor and/or alter his/her production (see also Backchannel signals, 3.3.1, Turn-yielding and Turn-beginning cues, 8.1).

Pragmatic effect is a desired effect that a sender attempts to achieve by his/her communication activity (see also Perlocutionary act, 10.2).

3.1.4 *Communication activity* includes a) production of a message (encoding of a message and generation of acoustic or visual signal), b) transfer of a message via a communication channel, and c) reception of a message (sensory perception of a signal), decoding and interpretation of a message.

It has been suggested (e.g., Ross 1989) that verbal communication is a circular process (it is already during the decoding phase that the encoding process starts) as well as a continuous process (a single act of communication is but a small part of a greater system of societal communication). Verbal communication is goal-oriented – it is driven by an effort on the part of the sender to reach his/her communicative intention (e.g., impart some news, request a service; see also Illocutionary force, 10.2) and secure a particular effect (e.g., receipt of the news, compliance with a request; see Perlocutionary act, 10.2). It is normally the concern of both participants to achieve communication success which occurs when the receiver interprets the sender´s intention and behaves accordingly. Because the phases of production and reception are not mirror-like processes, complete comprehension need not always be achieved. In any of the phases of communication activity, communication problems may arise; it is, however, within the capability of interlocutors to predict them and, in order to prevent them, to alter the course of their communicative activity. For example, to secure mutual understanding, senders may explicitly formulate their intention by clearly stating it (e.g., *I wish to apply for membership of …* in a business letter) or by using various markers (e.g., explicit performatives: *I promise I´ll never do it again; I warn you of the danger of driving in the dark*). They may anticipate a possible comprehension problem by switching to another code or by adjusting the code (e.g., by chosing a ´simpler´ code, as in popular scienific articles; see Code-switching and Accommodation theory, 9.3) or by altering the overall organization of their message (e.g., various methods of presentation of a new material at school setting).

During transfer, a possible communication noise may be coped with by increasing the redundancy in a message (e.g., by overemphasizing paralanguage in a crowded room, repeating the words, using chains of synonyms, paraphrases). Specific properties of a channel (e.g., lack of visual contact) may be attended to and compensated for by various techniques (e.g., ´smileys´,

used not only in electronic communication, represent a special code communicating humor, irony, sarcasm, sadness, etc.). Also, the time-lag between production and reception may be built into a message (e.g., *By the time you read this letter, ...*). During the phase of reception, receivers may misinterpret a message (e.g., multiple meanings of words or structures, a contextualization cue, such as a scornful smile signalling irony, etc.); by sending this information back to the source they may encourage the sender to make a ´repair´ (e.g., repeat a message or make an adjustment). It is important to realise, though, that a potential threat of communication breakdown as well as a certain amount of uncertainty may have stimulating effects on participants as it may activate them and increase the degree of their attention and interest.

3.2 *Situational Factors*

It is obvious that many characteristics of language use are directly related to the aspects of the situation (setting) in which particular speech activities take place. It is these situational factors which govern systems of linguistic expressions (language varieties). There have been many attempts to classify these situational variables (which are themselves not a part of the system of language), but the majority of them agree on a certain inventory of factors, such as the setting (time, place), the participants and their mutual relations, the type of connection channel, function, topic (subject matter) and code. The following are several attempts to describe the linguistic correlates of situational variation.

3.2.1 *SPEAKING*. Hymes (1972) suggests the acronym *SPEAKING* as a mnemonic device to present the following components of speech situation: Settings - setting, scene; Participants - speaker/hearer (sender/receiver, addressor/addressee), audience; Ends - functions (transactional or interactional) and outcomes (effects); Act sequences - message form and content; Key – tone, mood or manner (e.g., serious, formal, facetious, ironic, sarcastic); Instrumentalities – channel (verbal, non-verbal, face-to-face, written, electronic, etc.) and code (language variety); Norms - norms of interaction and interpretation; Genres – genre (e.g., lecture, seminar, story, joke) and/or a speech act (e.g., asking, answering) (cf. O´Grady et al. 1997).

3.2.2 *Dimensions of Situational Constraint.* Crystal and Davy (1969) propose the system of eight **dimensions of situational constraint** (i.e., sources of language variability) which are grouped into three categories:

A. relatively permanent features of language:

1. *individuality* – by using idiosyncratic linguistic/paralinguistic traits (handwriting, voice quality (see Voice signature, 8.3), turns of phrase, pet words, recurring syntactic patterns, etc.) in unselfconscious utterances a particular user of language is identified as an individual and a unique human being,
2. *dialect* – features indicating the user´s geographical location or origin (geographical dialect) or social ranking (social/class dialect) (see 9.3),
3. *time* – features providing diachronic information on a language item (i.e., from which period of the historical development of language it dates),

B. *discourse,* which includes variation given by

a) *medium*, (cf. *mode,* 9.2), i.e., the difference between speech and writing (see 4.2.1-3); medium may be ´simple´ when used as a means to an end in itself, e.g., speaking to be heard (a joke) and writing to be read (newspaper article), and ´complex´ when used as a means to

some further end, e.g., speaking to be written (taking notes during lectures) or writing to be spoken (a political speech read from a script),

b) *participation*, i.e., the difference between monologue and dialogue; participation is ´simple´ in the case when monologue is produced by one participant and dialogue by two participants, and ´complex´ when an utterance of one participant contains dialogical features (e.g., recounting a story which involves conversational exchanges) or when a dialogical encounter involves participants´ individual monologues (e.g., conversation consisting of extended turns in which participants reflect on their experience at length). The two aspects of discourse correlate: ´typical´ speaking is dialogical while ´typical´ writing is monological, although spoken monologues (narratives, lectures, political speeches) as well as written dialogues (e-mail communication, questionnaires, forms) are not uncommon at all; sometimes different terms are used to make a distinction between interactions involving two (*dyad, dyadic interaction*) from those involving more than two participants (*polylogue, polylogical interaction*),

C. relatively temporary features of language:

1. *province* (cf. *field*, 9.2) includes features providing information on the type of the (occupational and professional) activity the participants are engaged in, e.g., the province of advertising, the sub-province of television advertising; Crystal and Davy (1969) treat conversation as a special province of language because it is a mundane type of verbal activity in which participants engage regardless of their occupational activity and professional ranking,
2. *status* (cf. *tenor*, Černý´s (1992) theory of *functional styles* and Joos´ five *degrees of formality*, 9.2) includes features reflecting relative standing of a participant on the social scale, e.g., level of formality and informality, power and solidarity, politeness (see Register, 9.2 and Politeness, 10.5),
3. *modality* is understood here, similar to the traditional notion of ´genre´, as a conventional format of a message produced for a specific purpose; e.g., a brief informal message to a physically remote friend (i.e., the province of conversation) may be communicated via a host of spoken (a phone call, a message left in a telephone answering machine) and written (a postcard, an e-mail, an SMS message, a written note) modalities,
4. *singularity* involves, in contrast with the constraint of *individuality*, a deliberate use of some linguistics features for the purpose of achieving a specific (e.g., humorous, poetic) effect; those features of discourse which cannot be characterized as being variations along any of the above dimensions belong to the *common-core* features of language and, due to this ´neutrality´, they can potentially participate in the construction of any type of text - here belongs the majority of phonological, grammatical and lexical patterns. However, once they are distributionally marked (i.e., the pattern of their regular occurrence is noticeable), they may become ´stylemes´ (e.g., regular pattern of pre- and postmodification in some printed advertisements).

Mistrík (1997) developed a theory of **subjective** (controlled by the sender, such as author, esp. his/her age, temperament, preferences, inclinations, intellect, social background, etc.) and **objective** (outside the sender´s control, e.g., addressee, the setting, communicative function, topic, code) **factors** which jointly collaborate in determining the selection and arrangement of language resources to produce a particular style of utterance. Knittlová (1990) identifies the **function** of discourse (cf. Theory of functional styles, 6) as being the most important among other situational determinants which are spoken or written ´material´, dialogical or monological form, presence or absence of the recipient, spontaneity or preparedness of a discourse, static or

dynamic way of presentation, presence of rational or emotional elements (expressiveness) and private or official setting. Černý (1998) presents the list of **pragmatic factors** which influence speech communication: the time, place and the type of situation, the previous context, speaker´s communicative intention and the chosen strategies, the listener´s knowledge of speaker and the topic, social relationships between/among participants, their number and mutual distance, as well as the communication channel. Analogically, Enkvist (1964) offers an overview of features present in the ´**contextual spectrum**´.

3.3 *Goffman´s Theory of Communication Constraints*

Another systematic framework for the analysis of discourse is provided by **Goffman´s** (1976) **theory of communication constraints** which claims that since certain characteristics of verbal communication are systematically controlled by the nature of communication system, they are language-universal and so they should be present in all types of verbal communication. Interacting with these *system constraints* is the set of *ritual (social) constraints* which add to them a ´social´ dimension - they reflect as well as construct social norms regulating behaviour of their members (cf. Hatch 1992).

3.3.1 *System constraints*

1. *Channel open and close signals*; depending esp. on the type of channel or social context (spoken/written, formal/informal), different (verbal or non-verbal) conventional ways of signalling the opening and closing of communication are employed and reciprocally exchanged (e.g., formulaic expressions like introductory and/or farewell greetings, enquiries about one´s well-being, etc.). Not only that, partners´ readiness to begin (e.g., summons-answer adjacency pair) and close (preclosing signals) communication are mutually elicited, checked and confirmed. An important constitutive component of openings is the activity of participants aimed at their reciprocal identification and recognition (cf. Ferenčík 2002).
2. *Backchannel signals* (see Feedback, 3.1.3) secure the transfer of the information that the message is being received and signal the degree of (un)involvedness of the receiver in the communication. They may be verbal (noises: *mhm, right, really*) or non-verbal (smile, head nod) and may vary as to the degree of their spontaneity (casual conversation) and/or ritualization (religious congregations); in some contexts they may be more obligatory than in others (e.g. teachers´ feedback is mandatory in the classroom interaction),
3. *Turnover signals*; as communication is intrinsically an exchange between two parties, there are signals which project the end of individual contributions (e.g., turns in conversation) and the readiness to ´yield the floor´ – linguistic (end of syntactic unit), paralinguistic (reestablishment of eye-contact), suprasegmental (lowered intonation) (see also Turn-taking and Transition-relevant place, 8.1). These shifts normally happen smoothly and even if *overlaps* occur, they may indicate involvement rather than hostility or conflict. The right to produce an extended turn by a speaker is often ensured by a *preannouncement* or a *ticket* (6.3.1).
4. *Acoustically adequate and interpretable messages* are requirements that must be met in order to secure a successful message transfer as a prerequisite of its comprehension. Participants are striving to overcome the presence of communication noise (e.g., illegible handwriting, a missed ironical remark) and when they encounter an interpretation problem, a *repair* or requests for clarification may follow (cf. Repair, 8.4, Face-threatening act, 10.5). Also, they make an effort to use identical or similar code, or they may try to adjust their codes and build

a special code or register (e.g., expert vs. lay communication, baby talk, cf. Beebe and Giles´ (1984) Accommodation theory, 9.3).

5. *Bracket signals* help separate ´off-line´ (side) talk from ´on-line´ talk (see also Evaluation, 6.3.1) – they mark the beginning of a side sequence (discourse markers: *by the way*) and a return to the main message (*well, anyway*). In writing, the bracketed asides are conventionally marked off spatially (footnotes) or by punctuation (parentheses, dashes).
6. *Nonparticipant constraints* block up sources of communication noise with potentially disrupting effects. As a result, nonparticipants must compete for the admission to ongoing communication (i.e., change their status from non-participant to participant) by, e.g., gazing steadily or intently, waving, asking for a permission to enter conversation, etc.,
7. *Pre-empt signals* are ways of interrupting ongoing communication. As they are presented by a non-participant, permission must be elicited (e.g., by formulaic *excuse me,* or *May I interrupt?*); the signals may alter the course of communication or bring it to an end,
8. *Gricean norms* for communication include the principles of quality, quantity, relevance and clarity (these critera for cooperative communication are treated in the framework of the Cooperative Principle, see 10.3).

3.3.2 *Ritual constraints* present a culture-specific reflection of individual system constraints (needless to say, they offer vast possibilities of cross-cultural comparisons pinpointing various differences in cultural assumptions and expectations), which together help build a complicated social network of values, norms of conduct and appropriacy and, when adhered to, equip individual members with a feeling of their social worth, credit, *face* (10.5):

1. openings and closing give due recognition to the parties, are of appropriate length and structure, greetings are exchanged reciprocally and with due attention,
2. backchannel cues (e.g., smile) are expected to signal interest, support and encouragement,
3. in cooperative communication, participants expect to contribute evenly to communication and so they often compete for this ´right´ by timing of their turns (gaps, latching, silence) as well as by turn ordering (who talks after whom); however, differences in power and status (9.1) may lead to interactional asymmetries,
4. participants may adjust their codes in order to show alignment and solidarity – they may even play a kind of ´game´ which Hatch (1992) names ´benevolent conspiracy´, viz. they try to conceal communication problems caused by the insufficient overlap (knowledge) of their codes (this may often happen in communication of native with non-native language users); or, participants may wish to exclude the third party by not attempting to accommodate their code,
5. side sequences without overt boundaries may be in certain types of texts (e.g., postmodern fiction) preferred more than in others (e.g., academic writing), and it is the reader who is invited to take greater effort to supply missing connections,
6. joining communication in progress (e.g., in conversation) may be a difficult task because of the danger that a potential new participant will be treated as an intruder; also whispering and passing notes is a socially sanctionable behaviour because it excludes another party (i.e., assigns participants a non-participant status),
7. interruptions tend to be treated as disrespectful (and politeness-sensitive) acts, but, depending on the culture, situation, participants, etc., there exist socially ´acceptable interruptions´, i.e., ones without damaging effects to one´s face (e.g., when a task is urgent or beneficial to the ´interruptee´),
8. the lack of adherence to the principles of cooperation usually leads to social sanctions – e.g., some conversationalists may be disliked (hence only suffered or even avoided) because they

offer too much irrelevant detail (violation of the principle of quantity), they are incapable of talking to the point (violation of the principle of relevance), they may provide information which appears to contravene reality (violation of the principle of quality) and they may often lose sight of the main focus (violation of the principle of clarity) – in none of the cases do they behave cooperatively (see Cooperative Principle, 10.3). It is not the case, though, that conversationalists are always clearly focused or that they never lie - it is their partners´ assumption that they do observe the principles. Underlying all human communication is the mutually shared effort to achieve communication success and, at the same time, present oneself as a competent social creature while respecting identical social needs of the others (10.5).

3.4 *Communicative functions of language*

Depending on which component of the communication network is forefronted, we identify six **communicative functions** of language (they were developed, with varying degree of contribution, by K. Bühler, J. Mukařovský, B Malinowski, R. Jakobson):

1. *referential f.* (Bühler: *Darstellungsfunktion*) focuses on various aspects of a message and is related primarily to its content and context (place and time),
2. *metalingual f.* (R. Jakobson) is employed when the object of communication is the language (code) itself; here language is used to discuss language (e.g., conversational *Let me put it this way*) and/or organize a message (e.g., in metacommunication remarks, such as *First, I want to establish some basic points* in scholarly writing, or clarification request *Could you explain that please* in conversation),
3. *expressive f.* (Bühler: *Ausdrucksfunktion*) directs attention to the sender´s self-expression (attitudes, emotions),
4. *conative f.* (Bühler: *Appellfunktion*) emphasizes the sender´s intention to influence (change, alter) the receiver´s attitude, behaviour (e.g., interrogatives or directives used in persuasive discourse),
5. *poetic f.* (R.Jakobson) brings to the focus the form and structure of a message; it includes not only the area of poetry but also imaginative language use in ordinary communication, such as innovative language behaviour (*nonce-words*), word play, humour or figurative devices,
6. *phatic f.* is aimed at establishing and maintaining interpersonal contact; the content of a message is suppressed in favour of creating and reinforcing social bondage (B.Malinowski: *phatic communion*), avoiding silence, keeping the communication channel open (e.g., greeting and leave-taking formulae, ´safe´ topics, etc.; cf. Ferenčík 1992). From the sociolinguistic point of view, it is the most important communicative function (cf. Urbanová and Oakland 2002).

A widely employed model of language functions by M.A.K.Halliday (1994) identifies four communicative ´metafunctions´: *ideational* (referential, experiential, i.e., understanding the world), *interpersonal* (conative, expressive, i.e., acting on the participants), *textual* (construction of discourses) and *logical* (building logical connections within discourses).

It is important to realize that discourses rarely perform a single communicative function (e.g., a thank-you note - phatic f., a weathercast read by a radio announcer - referential f., syntactic parsing - metalingual f., etc.); rather, discourses combine more functions hierarchically, i.e., with one being dominating and others supporting. For example, a conversational event at a bus stop is principally a social encounter (greeting, addressing, enquiring about one´s general well-being, i.e., phatic f.) which may address particular aspects of the immediate environment (weather,

traffic, quality of bus service, i.e., referential f.) and in which participants reveal their physical and mental states (mood, health, i.e., expressive f.). In politicians´ speeches (e.g., during an election campaign) the conative function may dominate (i.e., persuading the audience of the rightness of the speaker´s conviction or attitude), while the persuasive power is being enhanced by the use of special turns of phrase, imagery, intonation (i.e., poetic f.). Of course, in speeches like a president´s state of the nation address, the phatic function plays an important role as well (establishing contact with members of the public through the system of address, 9.1).

It should also be noted that different communicative functions participate in the construction of discourse in a consistent arrangement. For example, being their indispensable parts, discourse openings and closings make room for establishing and ending of the contact. Or, a research paper presented at a linguistic conference may perform all functions: opening - addressing the audience (phatic f.), main body - talking on the subject (referential f.), organizing the talk whose topic is language (metalingual f.), expressing one´s attitude to the matter discussed (expressive f.), eliciting from the audience an agreement or disagreement (conative f.), enlivening the talk by a witty remark (poetic f.), closing – terminating the contact (phatic f.).

Communicative **functions** of language, which are viewed by the proponents of the structural-functional approach to text analysis as essential principles in the construction of discourse, are fundamental to the **stylistic differentiation** (classification of functional styles) as developed by the Prague school of functional stylistics (cf. Theory of functional styles, 6).