

Herasymenko L.

Communicative Functions of Aviation Radiotelephony Discourse

Herasymenko Liudmila, PhD in Pedagogics

Kirovohrad State Flight Academy of National Aviation University, Kirovohrad, Ukraine

Abstract. The article deals with the problem of defining communicative functions of Aviation radiotelephony discourse. The communicative function of an utterance corresponds to the speaker's intention in producing a given message. The author gives the analyses of the language forms and functions. Also the classification of language functions has been presented, according to which there has been outlined seven different functions of language: instrumental, regulatory, representational, interrelational, personal, heuristic, imaginative. The functions of Aviation radiotelephony discourse have been grouped into four categories corresponding to their role in carrying out ATC and piloting tasks. These categories are: triggering actions; sharing information; managing the pilot-controller relationship; managing the dialogue.

Keywords: *communication, communicative function, aviation radiotelephony discourse, functional approach, pilot-controller dialogue*

The communicative function of an utterance corresponds to the speaker's intention in producing a given message. For example his/her intention may be to *request information*, to *thank*, to *deny approval* and so on.

The theoretical underpinning for describing language functions derives from the work of philosophers of language on concepts such as speech acts and illocutionary force, and linguists such as J.L. Austin [1], M.A.K. Halliday [3], J. R. Searle [5]. More recently these theoretical categories have been of practical use in discourse analysis by such researchers as M. Coulthard, E. Roulet, J. Sinclair [6].

The aim of this article is to define communicative functions of Aviation radiotelephony discourse.

Pragmatic conventions of language are sometimes difficult to learn because of the disparity between language forms and functions. While forms are the outward manifestation of language, functions are the realization of those forms. «How much does that coast?» is usually a form functioning as a question, and «He bought a car» functions as a statement. But linguistic forms are not always unambiguous in their function. "I can't find my umbrella," uttered by a frustrated adult who is late for work on a rainy day may be a frantic request for all in the household to join in a search. A child who says "I want some ice cream" is rarely stating a simple fact or observation but requesting ice cream in her own intimate register. A sign on the street that says "one way" functions to guide traffic in only one direction.

Communication may be regarded as a combination of acts, a series of elements with purpose and intent. Communication is not merely an event, something that happens; it is functional, purposive, and designed to bring about some effect-some change, however subtle or unobservable- on the environment of hearers and speakers. Communication is a series of communicative acts or speech acts, to use John Austin's term [1], which are used systematically to accomplish particular purposes. Austin stressed the importance of consequences, the perlocutionary force, of linguistic communication. Researchers have since been led to examine communication in terms of the effect that utterances achieve. That effect has implications for both the production and comprehension of an utterance; both modes of performance serve to bring the communicative act to its ultimate purpose.

The functional approach to describing language is one that has its roots in traditions of British linguist J.R. Firth [2] who viewed language as interactive and interpersonal, "a way of behaving and making others behave". Since

then the term function has been variously interpreted. Michael Halliday [3], who provided one of the best expositions of language functions, used the term to mean the purposive nature of communication, and outlined seven different functions of language:

1. The *instrumental* function serves to manipulate the environment to cause certain events to happen.

2. The *regulatory* function of language is the control of events. While such control is sometimes difficult to distinguish from the instrumental function, regulatory functions of language are not so much the "unleashing" of certain power as the maintenance of control.

3. The *representational* function is the use of language to make statements, convey facts and knowledge, explain, or report-that is, to "represent" reality as one sees it.

4. The *interactional* function of language serves to ensure social maintenance. "Phatic communion," Malinowski's term referring to the communicative contact between and among human beings that simply allows them to establish social contact and to keep channels of communication open, is part of the interactional function of language. Successful interactional communication requires knowledge of slang, jargon, jokes, folklore, cultural mores, politeness and formality expectations, and other keys to social exchange.

5. The *personal* function allows a speaker to express feelings, emotions, personality, "gut-level" recreations. A person's individuality is usually characterized by his or her use of the personal function of communication. In the personal nature of language, cognition, affect and culture all interact in ways that have not yet been explored.

6. The *heuristic* function involves language used to acquire knowledge, to learn about the environment. Heuristic function is often conveyed in the form of questions that will lead to answers.

7. The *imaginative* function serves to create imaginary systems or ideas. Telling fairy tales, joking, or writing a novel are all uses of the imaginative function.

These seven different functions of language are neither discrete nor mutually exclusive. A single sentence or conversation might incorporate many different functions simultaneously.

Yet it is the understanding of how to use linguistic forms to achieve these functions of language that comprises the crux of second language learning. A learner might acquire correct word order, syntax, and lexical items but not understand how to achieve a desired and intended function through careful selection of words, structure, intonation, nonverbal signals, and astute percep-

tion of the context of a particular stretch of discourse. Halliday's seven functions of language tend to mask the almost infinite variety and complexity of functions that we accomplish through language. Van Ek and Alexander's [7] taxonomy lists almost 70 different functions to be taught in English curricula. Some of these functions are listed below:

- Greeting, parting, inviting, accepting;
- Complimenting, congratulating, flattering, seducing, charming, bragging;
- Interrupting;
- Requesting;
- Evading, lying, shifting blame, changing the subject;
- Criticizing, reprimanding, ridiculing, insulting, threatening, warning;
- Complaining;
- Accusing, denying;
- Agreeing, disagreeing, arguing;
- Persuading, insisting, suggesting, reminding, asserting, advising;
- Reporting, evaluating, commenting;
- Commanding, ordering, demanding;
- Questioning, probing;
- Sympathizing;
- Apologizing, making excuses.

All of these fall into one or more of Halliday's seven functions, and all of them are common everyday acts whose performance requires knowledge of language.

Since intentions are inherently linked to the activities that are being undertaken by the speakers, it is evident that those tasks which are peculiar to the jobs of pilot and controller will give rise to a limited range of communicative functions occurring with a high degree of frequency.

J. Melll & C. Godmet [4] suggest the dominant functions in pilot-controller dialogue. The functions have been grouped into four categories corresponding to their role in carrying out ATC and piloting tasks. These categories are:

1. Triggering actions
2. Sharing information
3. Managing the pilot-controller relationship
4. Managing the dialogue

The "triggering actions" category is the core function of pilot-controller communications. Supporting the core is the "sharing information" category in the sense that appropriate actions can only be triggered when the pilot and controller are in possession of sufficient shared information about the current situation. The two last categories play a subordinate mediating role with regard to the first two. An examination of the functions listed under these headings will give an idea

The individual functions in each broad category are labelled in the checklist without making reference to specific ATC/piloting topics such as *clearances to take off*, *flight plan changes* or *radar identification*. All of these functions and their associated language forms can be usefully learned and practised by referring to general topics in the context of everyday communication.

The first category 'triggering actions' is realized through orders, requests and offers to act, advice, permis-

sions and undertakings. For example, the orders may take the following forms:

1) affirmative sentences: *Skyfly 053, cleared ILS approach, runway 09.*

2) imperative sentences: *Critter 592, turn left heading three-three-zero.*

The example of advice: *Traffic avoided thunderstorm to the north.*

The requests can be from the pilot (*Request any known conflicting traffic*) and from the air traffic controller (*Report passing flight level 150*). The peculiar feature of these requests is the usage of different words *request* for a pilot and *report* for an air traffic controller.

The second category 'sharing information' contains the following communicative functions: information concerning present facts, information concerning the future, information concerning immediate/recent past events, information concerning the past, necessity, feasibility/capacity. All these can be addressed both to the pilot and the air traffic controller. For example,

1. *Air Traffic Controller (ATC): Skyfly 102, roger, your expected approach time 35 due traffic.*

2. *ATC: Are you able to lose 10 minutes on route?*

Aircraft (ACFT): Negative, only 7 minutes.

The important part of the radiotelephony communication is managing the pilot-controller relationship that comprises such communicative functions according to the research of J. Melll & C. Godmet [4]: greet/take leave; thank; respond to greeting/leave-taking; respond to thanks; complain; express dissatisfaction; reprimand; apologise; express satisfaction; express concern/apprehension; reassure; encourage.

The last category of communicative functions 'managing the dialogue' comprises the following: self-correct; paraphrase; - close an exchange; - request response; check understanding; check certainty; correct a misunderstanding; read back; acknowledge; declare non-understanding; request repetition; request confirmation; request clarification; give confirmation; give disconfirmation; give clarification; relay an order; relay a request to act; relay a request for permission.

Contextual factors may result in certain functions being more or less "marked" for different attitudes such as *politeness*, *insistence* and so on. These markers, which may be lexical ("please") or grammatical ("Could you possibly give me...?"), need to be learned and practised as well as the language structures for the basic functions. Many communicative functions are paired with one another. That is to say that a given function (e. g. *request permission*) is commonly adjacent to another given function (e. g. *give permission*) in the context of an exchange.

The primary purpose of defining the communicative functions is to enable language course planners and teachers to formulate linguistically appropriate objectives for training and testing. While no claim is made for the checklist to be exhaustive, its coverage has been cross-checked against the published results of a number of linguistic or human factors studies of pilot-controller communications.

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Герасименко Л.С. Коммуникативные функции дискурса авиационной радиотелефонии

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается проблема определения коммуникативных дискурса авиационной радиотелефонной связи. Коммуникативная функция высказывания соответствует намерению говорящего во время продуцирования данного сообщения. Автор дает анализ языковых форм и функций. Представлена классификация функций языка, согласно которой выделяется семь различных функций языка: инструментальная, регулирующая, взаимодействия, представительская, личная, эвристическая; воображаемая. Функции дискурса авиационной радиотелефонии были сгруппированы в четыре категории, соответствующие их роли в осуществлении УВД и пилотирования. Эти категории: запуск действия; обмена информацией; управление отношениями между пилотом и диспетчером; управления диалогом.

Ключевые слова: *общение, коммуникативная функция, дискурс авиационной радиотелефонии, функциональный подход, диалог между пилотом и диспетчером*