

## What Are Language Functions?

We use language to communicate.

We use language for a reason.

Language functions are the purposes of *why* we are communicating.



## Halliday's Functions of Language

### “macro functions”

Instrumental: Language used to fulfil a need on the part of the speaker.

Regulatory: Language used to influence the behaviour of others.

Interactional: Language used to develop social relationships.

Personal: Language used to express the personal preferences and identity of the speaker.

Representational: Language used to exchange information.

Heuristic: Language used to learn and explore the environment.

Imaginative: Language used to explore the imagination.

## Examples of language (micro) functions:

- Comparing
- Persuading
- Asking for opinions
- Expressing likes and dislikes
- Suggesting
- Summarizing
- Encouraging
- Predicting
- Agreeing / disagreeing
- Greeting people / introducing

Example:

Asking if someone is interested

“What are your interests?”

“What are you interested in?”

“Are you keen on ...?”

“Are you a fan of ...?”

“Do you find ... interesting?”

**Notice these are different forms (grammar)**

**But the function is the same.**

Example of different functions with “could”

“**Could** you open the window?”

= **requesting**

“He **could** be late”

= **uncertainty/possibility**

“When he was 7, he **could** ride a bike.”

= **past ability**

“You **could** go to Spain”

= **suggesting**

**Different functions, same word.**