



Roman Osipovich Jakobson


October 11, 1896 – July 18, 1982

A Russian–American linguist and literary
theorist




Jakobson, age twenty-three, summer 1920, Prague

Jakobson was born in Russia to a well-to-do family of Jewish descent, the industrialist Osip Jakobson and chemist Anna Volpert Jakobson, and he developed a fascination with language at a very young age. He studied at the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages and then at the Historical-Philological Faculty of Moscow University.



Influenced by the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, Jakobson developed, with Nikolai Trubetzkoy, techniques for the analysis of sound systems in languages, inaugurating the discipline of phonology.





Six communication functions, each associated with a dimension or factor of the communication process:

- referential (contextual information)
- poetic (auto-reflection)
- emotive (self-expression)
- conative (imperative addressing of receiver)
- phatic (checking channel working)
- metalingual (checking code working)



Major works:

- Novejšaja russkaja poèzija, intended as an introduction to Xlebnikov's Collected Works, 1919
- Jakobson R., Child Language, Aphasia and Phonological Universals, 1941
- Jakobson R., Selected Writings (ed. Stephen Rudy). The Hague, Paris, Mouton, in six volumes (1971–1985):
 - I. Phonological Studies, 1962
 - II. Word and Language, 1971
 - III. The Poetry of Grammar and the Grammar of Poetry, 1980
 - IV. Slavic Epic Studies, 1966
 - V. On Verse, Its Masters and Explores, 1978
 - VI. Early Slavic Paths and Crossroads, 1985
- Jakobson R., Halle M., Fundamentals of Language, 1956