

# Language Theory

# Hymes's theory of communicative competence

- Start from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop what Hymes (1972) referred to as "communicative competence.
- Hymes's theory of communicative competence was a definition of what a speaker needs to know in order to be communicatively competent in a speech community

## Halliday's functional account of language use

- "Linguistics ... is concerned... with the description of speech acts or texts, since only through the study of language in use are all the functions of language, and therefore all components of meaning, brought into focus" (Halliday 1970: 145).

# Halliday's functional account of language use

## **7 basic functions that language performs for children learning their first language**

1. the instrumental function: using language to get things;
2. the regulatory function: using language to control the behaviour of others;
3. the interactional function: using language to create interaction with others;
4. the personal function: using language to express personal feelings and meanings;
5. the heuristic function: using language to learn and to discover;
6. the imaginative function: using language to create a world of the imagination;
7. the representational function: using language to communicate information

# Characteristics of this communicative view of language

- 1. Language is a system for the expression of meaning.
- 2. The primary function of language is for interaction and communication.
- 3. The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses.
- 4. The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse.