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Level of Text in the Language System

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Abstract: In recent years, linguistic studies have increasingly employed a systemic approach to language, analyzing it as an integrated structure composed of interrelated components. This paper examines the hierarchy within language structures, proposing the text level as the highest tier above syntax, morphology, and phonology. Drawing parallels between linguistic structures and knowledge structures, the paper suggests that language inherently mirrors the organization of knowledge. The study concludes that language, particularly at the text level, serves as a means of objectifying and structuring human knowledge, positioning it as a bridge between communicative function and cognitive representation.

Key words: Linguistics, language system, text level, knowledge structure, hierarchy, communicative function, cognitive representation.

Introduction

Linguistics has witnessed a paradigm shift toward systemic analysis, where language is studied as a complex system composed of interdependent components. Traditionally, language levels—phonological, morphological, lexical, and syntactic—constituted the hierarchical model of language structure. However, recent scholarship suggests the inclusion of a text level, representing an integrative tier that connects language systems to communicative and cognitive functions. This study explores the justification and implications of recognizing a text level, which aligns linguistic elements with knowledge structures, proposing that language inherently reflects the layered organization of human knowledge.

Literature Review

Research into linguistic hierarchies has been influenced by scholars such as Moskalskaya, Hausenblas, Nerius, and Scharnhorst, who argue that the purpose of language extends beyond structural and grammatical functions to embrace a communicative role. Scharnhorst, for example, posits that the language system's purpose is to facilitate social communication, suggesting a communicative hierarchy where the text level occupies the highest tier. Other scholars support the idea that language structure parallels the structure of knowledge, asserting that language not only conveys meaning but also organizes knowledge. This review synthesizes key contributions to the understanding of language as a system of layered structures, each with distinct functional roles that support knowledge representation.

Methodology

This study employs a comparative analysis approach, examining linguistic hierarchies alongside generalized knowledge structures to explore parallels. It reviews linguistic models and knowledge organization theories, drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives to compare linguistic elements (e.g., phonemes, morphemes, lexemes) with cognitive structures (e.g., concepts, judgments, knowledge fragments). The research also reviews hierarchical models in linguistics, particularly those positing a higher-level text tier, to substantiate the connection between language and knowledge systems.

Research Methods

Data was gathered from theoretical linguistic and cognitive science literature, focusing on structural models and hierarchical systems. Texts were analyzed to identify the levels within linguistic and

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knowledge structures, examining how each tier reflects increasing complexity in function. The comparative analysis focused on matching linguistic units (e.g., phonological, morphological, lexical) to corresponding cognitive concepts (e.g., distinction of concepts, incomplete concepts, judgments, knowledge fragments), thereby revealing the hierarchy's functional alignment.

The main part

In recent decades, linguistics has adopted a systematic approach to language study, focusing on the analysis of complex entities as integrated systems composed of interrelated components with unique properties. In this view, components interact within a structure, creating an internal organization directly tied to the system's overarching function. "Revealing the structure of the whole enables us to comprehend the specific place, role, and significance of each component within the system, to understand why each component is the way it is within the system and performs a particular function over any other" [1, 37].

In this systematic approach, understanding the whole generally proceeds from examining the system's composition (its elements), moving to its structure (internal organization), and finally to its functions (how it operates). Since "each system is always a component of a higher-level system and, in turn, consists of lower-level components and subsystems" [1, 35], analysis of a system cannot be separated from studying its environment and context.

Traditionally, linguistics identifies the phonological, morphological, lexical, and syntactic levels as the main tiers in the language hierarchy. However, more recently, scholars such as O.I. Moskalskaya, K. Hausenblas, D. Nerius, and I. Scharnhorst have proposed recognizing an additional tier above the sentence level—the text level. Scharnhorst notes: "If we consider that the purpose of the language system is to ensure social communication, then its main function (supposedly mental) is communicative, realized in utterances. Consequently, the highest tier should naturally be the one that bridges the language system to communication. Conversely, the lowest tier is the one farthest from performing communicative functions. Thus, a hierarchy of linguistic levels is established, with text at the highest level, followed by syntax, lexis, and morphology" [5, 47].

The motivation for introducing this higher level in language modeling is the identification of structures in language that cannot be adequately explained within lower tiers. One potential basis for defining levels in the language system is to compare language structures to those of knowledge structures, including scientific knowledge. Although each field of knowledge has its content structure, commonalities and general principles across knowledge structures form an overarching framework that could be termed generalized knowledge structure. Here, "knowledge" is interpreted broadly, encompassing both abstract-theoretical knowledge ("scientific knowledge") and practical, everyday knowledge ("common knowledge").

The formation and development of knowledge are intrinsically linked to language. "The most suitable material for analysis lies in the processes, means, and products of communicative activity, wherein knowledge finds a materialized, objectified expression, rather than in purely individual cognitive phenomena... The starting point for analyzing knowledge is not the individual subject's relationship with a confronting object but the study of functioning and evolving systems of collective, intersubjective activity rooted in external object transformation" [4, 179-180].

The vast repository of human knowledge is highly structured, yet individual sciences share significant commonalities in foundational assumptions and principles. Given the trend toward knowledge integration, one can conceptualize the highest, most generalized level in a knowledge structure model as the "cumulative knowledge of the world." This cumulative knowledge divides into distinct domains (such as linguistics, physics, chemistry, mathematics) and branches of everyday knowledge, all elements of a lower level. Knowledge within each domain is structured, formed from individual theoretical frameworks and factual "knowledge fragments," which constitute another level in this model.

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Knowledge fragments, in turn, consist of judgments about objects and relationships, forming yet another level of knowledge. Judgments arise from concepts—elementary understandings of objects or relationships—constituting a further level. Concepts are themselves built upon incomplete notions—rudimentary understandings of objects or relationships at the next tier, ultimately leading to a fundamental "level of distinction" of concepts.

Thus, this generalized vertical knowledge structure consists of the following levels: cumulative knowledge of the world, domain knowledge (scientific or common), knowledge fragment, judgment, concept, incomplete concept, and distinction of concepts. These levels are distinguished by the complexity of the cognitive structures they describe. Units at the knowledge fragment level and higher represent complex, relatively complete knowledge structures, while units at lower levels typically function as components of knowledge fragments.

Language, as a communicative medium, also serves as a means of knowledge objectification. It is therefore expected that the language system's structure would reflect the generalized knowledge structure to some extent. "...Knowledge expressed in language represents only a secondary world, with principles that mirror the original, albeit in a subjective form" [3, 10]. Since "the essence of language lies in its ability to communicate," a comprehensive view of language across its functional properties must start from a systemic and hierarchical representation, considering language's communicative purpose, ultimately determining the roles of its elements—phonemes, lexemes, and phrases, each organized within defined communicative fragments (utterances) [2, 22-23].

Based on these ideas, one can map the stratification of the language system to levels of knowledge. The phonological level of the language system corresponds to the "distinction level" of knowledge, where the unit—phoneme—distinguishes meanings of words and morphemes through sound differentiation. The morphological level aligns with the "incomplete concept" level, as morphemes express these notions. The lexical level aligns with the "concept" level, with lexemes as units. Sentences align with the "judgment" level, representing knowledge about objects and relationships. The text level corresponds to the "knowledge fragment" level, as the content of a text reflects a relatively complete knowledge fragment. Kolshansky calls the text the "main unit of language" [2, 8]. The "domain knowledge" level, encompassing complete knowledge systems, corresponds to the text area level, as each text belongs to a specific domain. Finally, the level of "cumulative knowledge of the world" in language equates to the "totality of texts."

In this way, language reflects generalized knowledge structures across all levels, with the text serving as a coherent system that integrates lower-level units, offering the potential to explore and describe new properties of these units.

Conclusion

The study concludes that language serves as both a communicative and cognitive medium, with its hierarchical structure reflecting that of human knowledge. By introducing the text level as the highest linguistic tier, it becomes possible to capture the complex interrelationships between language and knowledge. The findings support the view that language, particularly at the text level, organizes and objectifies knowledge, enabling its communication and structuring within human cognition. This approach reaffirms the systemic function of language in bridging cognition and communication through a hierarchically structured framework.

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