

# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE IN TEXT INTERPRETATION

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**Abstract:** *the present article determines the notion of knowledge and knowledge structure in the various cases. The notion of language intended to extract, store and transfer information necessitates the study of the ways and mechanisms of presenting knowledge in language. Knowledge and its representation are key issues of cognitive sciences in general and cognitive linguistics in particular. From the point of view of linguoculturology knowledge is regarded as the result of cognition of the surrounding world, as an adequate reflection of reality in the human's mind, as a product of processing verbal and non-verbal experience that forms "the image of the world", on the basis of which one can make his own judgments and conclusions [1].*

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Most cognitivists agree that knowledge in the human mind consists of mental representations constructed of concepts, analogies, images, relations between elements within a single mental space. It is acknowledged that knowledge is not an amorphous entity; it is structured to present certain blocks of information, and that conditioned the use of the term "knowledge structures". It is worthy of note that this phenomenon is known under various names "depositories of knowledge", "encyclopedic knowledge", "knowledge-base", "back-ground knowledge", "formats of knowledge", etc. Despite some terminological discrepancy, overall knowledge structures are understood as blocks of information containing a system of interrelated concepts.

There are different types of knowledge structures: linguistic (lexicon, grammar, phonetics word-formation, etc.); encyclopedic (world knowledge, history, politics, economies, nature, etc.), communicative (communicative aims and intentions, conditions and circumstances), cultural (literature, art, cultural values, customs and traditions, etc.). All these types of knowledge are united into two main groups: linguistic knowledge and non-linguistic or knowledge of the world presented in the human mind. The problem of relationships between knowledge structures and their verbal explications is a key issue of cognitive linguistics [2]. In this respect, a crucial task is to define which elements of language are most relevant to knowledge representations. Knowledge structures are presented in the human mind in the forms of "frames" (a stereotyped situation and its verbal representation), "scripts" (a stereotyped dynamic sequence of events, episodes, facts), "gestalts" (a united structure combining both emotional and rational components).

The notion of knowledge structures proves to be of much significance for cognitive stylistics, and particularly for text interpretation. Text interpretation is regarded as a purposeful cognitive activity aimed at understanding and perception of the information conveyed by the text. The procedure of interpretation consists of constructing and verifying hypothesis about deep-lying information of the text. Cognitive linguistics states that interpretation should be done within the framework of certain modules of understanding:

- using language knowledge;
- constructing and verifying hypothetical interpretations;
- constructing the "model world" of the text;
- reconstructing the author's intentions;
- establishing relationships between the "inner world" of the addressee and that of the addresser [3].

From the linguistic point of view an important task of interpretation is finding basic linguistic signals, markers to be guided by the process of interpretation. In this respect the linguistic units aimed to represent various types of knowledge structures which are of special significance. It is accounted for, by the fact that knowledge structures and their conceptualization foster constructing the "model world" of the text and reconstructing the author's.

As our observations have shown stylistic devices play an important role in representations of knowledge structures. Illustrative in this respect are such stylistic devices as allusion, symbol, antonomasia in literary text fulfill the pragmatic function "to activate knowledge structures". The term "activation" is understood as stimulation of certain parts of the brain in the process of speech activity under the influence of verbal signals aimed to represent certain knowledge structures [3]. Proceeding from this notion we can suppose that in a fictional text some language units are used with a deliberate aim to activate the knowledge structures relevant to

the conceptual information of the text. The process of activating knowledge structures in the text can be described as follows: under the impact of some verbal signals - a certain contour scheme (frame) is activated, but many slots of this frame remain unexplicated, implicit. The explication of these slots is achieved by the study of frame associations, encyclopedic knowledge, and contextual links of a verbal signal-stimulus.

One of the most conspicuous means used to activate knowledge structures in the literary text is allusion. Indirect reference, by word or phrase, historical, literary, mythological, biblical facts or to the facts of everyday life made in the course of speaking or writing. The use of allusion presupposes the background knowledge of the event, thing or person alluded to on the part of the reader or listener (4). In other words, allusions activate different kinds of knowledge structures. According to the type of knowledge structures allusions can be divided into religious, mythological, literary, and historical.

The allusive title of the story by O'Henry "The gift of the Magi" can serve as an illustration. The story tells us about a poor couple who on the eve of Christmas presented each other with the gift, which appeared to be quite useless. The title activates knowledge structures of a biblical legend about the Magi who came a long way from the East to Bethlehem to worship and to give gifts to newly born Jesus Christ. This knowledge helps decode the conceptual information of the story and get a deeper insight into the author's purpose. The true love of these young people is equaled here to the wisdom of the Magi, and the gifts, though seemingly useless, become a symbol of love, sacrifice and wisdom.

Though by having background knowledge our path in reading, writing or in understanding the particular text become very smooth. Furthermore interpretation of any text is accomplished in skillful order. One of the options that belong to this process which we call TIME can be preserved.

In conclusion, it should be stressed that knowledge structures, their activation and conceptualization in the literary texts play an undoubtedly important and conceptually significant role in text interpretation. After all brain start functioning in a rapid pace giving us an opportunity making instant decisions.

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