THE PROBLEM OF THE BASIC UNIT OF TEXT

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The problem of the sign unit underlying the formation of an expanded text primarily affects the definition of the textual status of the sentence. After all, it is the sentence that is recognized as a grammatically formed integral unit of speech according to the laws of this language – the main means of forming, expressing and communicating thoughts. Already in this almost universally accepted approach to a sentence, its verbal or textual connectedness is clearly indicated. The textual connectedness of the sentence did not go unnoticed by syntaxists of the last generation. In fact, without taking into account this side of the sentence, it would be impossible to read its meaning in the context of speech. Accordingly, the text was quite naturally taken by linguists-syntaxists of past times as a background for revealing the inner structure of the sentence. At the same time, the sentence seemed to be the highest grammatically organized segment of the language.

This representation of the sentence has been preserved until the early stage of modern linguistics. It was clearly reflected in Bloomfield's well-known position that "sentences in any utterance are distinguished by the simple fact that each sentence is an independent linguistic form that is not included by means of one or another grammatical construction in any more complex linguistic form". Let us compare with this provision E. Benveniste's interpretation of the sentence level as the upper boundary of objects studied by linguistics.

Thus, until recently, the text in its relation to the sentence was reduced for the linguist-syntactist to the diagnostic context, that is, the textual minimum that is necessary to reveal the functional purpose of the various sides, forms and elements of the sentence. However, in the objective reality of the language, the text exists not only as a contextual minimum of meaning diagnostics. It also exists as a complete whole, whether it is a written monologue or an oral dialogue. What place should a sentence occupy in the linguistic study of a text? Should it be excluded from this sphere of knowledge as an "underlying" category? Or maybe it should be discarded altogether, recognizing it as a category historically limited and exhausted its cognitive power in early linguistic theories that did not come into contact with the concept of a whole text?

In modern works related to the study of the text, there is a tendency to shift the sentence from the position of the realized message to the position of the "language model" or "virtual sign", which is revealed only in the internal structure of the text. As for the immediate text-forming unit, which is revealed in such a segmentation of the text, which is "objectively" given to the recipient of the message, for oral speech, for example, a syntagma or a semantic segment allocated by phonetic dissection of speech is put forward for this role, and for written speech – a super-phrasal unity.

The involvement in the study of the principle of paradigmatics, which is fundamental not only for morphology, but no less for syntax, shows, however, that a sentence in its concrete verbal embodiment is a fundamentally important element of expression precisely from the point of view of the structure of the text. This becomes

clear as soon as we take into account the fact that the sentence is an expression of predication, that is, the attribution of the nominative content of speech to reality. None of the "true" units of the text indicated as alternatives to the sentence has its own means of predication.

This means that outside the sentence, the text cannot express any judgments, no conclusions, no questions, no motives, no wishes, or other more fractional components of intentional ("pragmatic") content, that is, it loses the ability to serve as a full-fledged means of meaningful reflection of the surrounding world and, consequently, a full-fledged means of communication.

Research shows that phonetic segmentation of speech, especially monologue, can indeed differ significantly from its propositive-predicative division. However, it should be borne in mind that different non-predicative segments, allocated to an independent position by accent-pausing means (phrases, separate significant and non-significant words, interjections and even inarticulate exclamations), become carriers of informative meaning only in conjunction with predicative speech cores, only as part of predicative word combinations.

As for the supra-phrasal unity, then, on the one hand, considered as a semantic association of independent sentences, and, on the other hand, approved by its researchers as a "microtext", it not only does not cancel, but, on the contrary, should by definition assume the text-forming role of the sentence.

A. I. Smirnitsky, within the framework of modern syntactic theory, elevated a sentence to the rank of a minimal "speech product" – the ultimate unit of text decomposition. The validity of this provision is demonstrated by an infinite number of examples of speech practice, in which a sentence, being a predicatively-formed unit of a message, now and then falls into a position of isolation (for example, in one-sentence dialogue replicas). The extreme case of such isolation is represented by the shortest whole texts consisting of a single sentence (proverbs, aphorisms, announcements, etc.).

But in connection with the above, another question arises: is there a limiting and syntactically significant unit of the second-order text that stands above the sentence in the segmental hierarchy of the language and serves as a transitional link between the sentence and the whole text?

Let's try to find the answer to this question by referring to the text itself.

Reviewing the textual material contained in the sequences of sentences, we note that these sequences, generally speaking, do not necessarily form a coherent semantic whole. The presence of such sequences gave L. Bloomfield a reason to exclude the text from grammar. Here is his example: "How are you? It's a fine day. Are you going to play tennis this afternoon?"

Without revealing signs of any kind of unification into a single syntactic-semantic segment, such a sequence can interest grammar only from the point of view of forms and ways of transition from the expression of one thought to another. But the very reflection of an unrelated sequence of the subject (thematic) transition in the chain of messages shows that even such a sequence does not contradict the position of a continuous text as a thematic-semantic unity formed by grammatically correlated sentences.

Each of the sentences of an unrelated sequence in potency can serve as the beginning of a related sequence that reveals some common theme. Related sequences appear in the form of numerous unities – thematic associations of sentences, which are commonly called super-phrasal unities.

The speech material abundantly contains examples of textual correlations of a free–standing sentence with some related sequence of sentences - both with a poly-

propositional replica of the dialogue and with a monological super-phrasal unity. The latter on the letter can either be framed in the form of a paragraph, or, even more significantly, not be framed in the form of a paragraph, forming one of its structural and semantic components. And here we find the desired marginal, elementary unit of the second-order text – a unit that does not cancel the text-forming status of the sentence, but stands, nevertheless, above the sentence in the hierarchy of sign segments.

This is a thematizing (topicalizing) unit of the text, which can be expressed by a union of sentences – a super–phrasal unity, or it can be expressed by a single sentence. This unit is called a "dicteme", based on the emic principle of designating the level-forming segments of the language.

Generally speaking, this unit could also be called the term "texteme", which is already being used in the literature, however, firstly, this term correlates in an undesirable way with the concept of a whole text, interpreted by some linguists as the main unit of language, and secondly, it is used in the meaning of an utterance or a sentence actualized in speech.

The result is the following hierarchical series of language segments: phoneme, morpheme, lexeme, phraseme, proposeme, dicteme. It is important to emphasize that each element of the series and, accordingly, the level represented by it is clearly distinguished by its own inherent linguistic function.

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