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TEXT DESCRIPTION AND ITS TYPES IN WORLD LINGUISTICS

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Abstract

This article investigates the description of text and its main types in world linguistics, tracing the significant paradigm shift from sentence-level analysis to the study of extended communicative units. It synthesizes foundational theoretical frameworks developed across European, Anglo-American, and Russian linguistic traditions. Central to the discussion is Robert-Alain de Beaugrande and Wolfgang Dressler's definition of text as a communicative occurrence governed by seven interdependent standards of textuality: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality.

Keywords: text linguistics; standards of textuality; text types; cohesion and coherence; discourse analysis; functional linguistics; narrative texts; argumentative texts

The evolution of linguistic inquiry in the twentieth century marked a profound shift from the analysis of isolated sentences to the comprehensive study of texts as fundamental units of communication. Traditional sentence grammars, dominant in structuralist and early generative paradigms, proved insufficient for explaining how meaning is constructed, negotiated, and interpreted in real communicative events. World linguistics responded by developing text linguistics (*Textlinguistik* in German scholarship), discourse analysis, and related fields that treat the text as a coherent, purposeful, and contextually embedded phenomenon. This article examines the description of the text in global linguistic traditions and systematically explores its principal types, drawing on foundational contributions from European, Anglo-American, and Russian scholarship. [13]

A text is not merely a string of sentences but a communicative occurrence that satisfies specific standards of textuality. Robert-Alain de Beaugrande and Wolfgang U. Dressler, in their seminal 1981 work, define a text as "a communicative occurrence which meets seven standards of textuality." [6] If any standard is not satisfied from the receiver's perspective, the occurrence fails to function as a text. This procedural, cognitive-communicative definition contrasts with purely formal or structural views.

M.A.K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan emphasize the semantic nature of text: "A text is a unit of language in use. It is not a grammatical unit, like a clause or a sentence… A text is best regarded as a *semantic* unit; a unit not of form but of meaning." [2] Their perspective highlights that textual unity arises from semantic relations that transcend sentence boundaries.

Teun A. van Dijk approaches text from a cognitive and pragmatic standpoint, viewing it within broader discourse contexts and introducing the concept of macrostructures–global semantic representations that organize local propositions into coherent wholes. [3] In the Russian linguistic tradition, I.R. Galperin defined text as a structured, complete, and purposeful product of speech activity, stressing its written, organized character in opposition to spontaneous oral speech. [4] Z.Y. Turaeva further elaborated on the multidimensional nature of literary texts, distinguishing deep and surface structures. [5]

These definitions collectively underscore that a text possesses internal organization, communicative intent, and contextual appropriateness. The transition from sentence to text reflects broader theoretical movements: the limitations of Chomskyan sentence grammar, the influence of

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pragmatics, cognitive science, and functional linguistics, and the recognition that real language use occurs in extended stretches oriented toward social goals. [9]

De Beaugrande and Dressler's seven standards provide the most influential framework for describing what constitutes a text:

1. **Cohesion** – surface-level grammatical and lexical ties (reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, lexical cohesion). Halliday and Hasan's *Cohesion in English* (1976) remains the definitive treatment, cataloguing devices that create "texture." [7][10]
2. **Coherence** – conceptual continuity and logical sense relations among propositions, ensuring the text "makes sense" in the receiver's mind.
3. **Intentionality** – the text producer's deliberate aim to achieve a communicative goal.
4. **Acceptability** – the receiver's willingness to treat the occurrence as a communicative text relevant to their needs and expectations.
5. **Informativity** – the balance between expected and unexpected information; texts must be neither wholly predictable nor overwhelmingly novel.
6. **Situationality** – the text's appropriateness to its physical, social, and psychological context.
7. **Intertextuality** – the ways a text relates to prior or contemporary discourses, genres, and cultural knowledge. [1]

These standards are not rigid checklists but dynamic principles that interact during text production and reception. Disturbances (e.g., deliberate incoherence in experimental literature) may still yield a communicative text if other standards compensate.

Classifying texts has been a central concern of text linguistics. While no universal typology exists, functional-rhetorical classifications based on dominant communicative purpose and cognitive operations have gained wide acceptance. Egon Werlich's *A Text Grammar of English* (1976) distinguishes five basic text types according to their dominant cognitive and linguistic features: description, narration, exposition, argumentation, and instruction. [8]

Narrative texts represent changes of state or events in temporal sequence. They typically employ past-tense verbs, temporal conjunctions (*then, after, suddenly*), and chronological ordering. Classic examples include novels, news reports of events, and personal anecdotes. Narrative texture relies heavily on cohesion through time expressions and participant tracking via pronouns and proper names.

Descriptive texts portray states, qualities, or appearances of entities, often organized spatially or by attributes. They feature extensive use of adjectives, stative verbs (*be, seem, appear*), and spatial prepositions. Travel guides, character portraits in fiction, and scientific descriptions of phenomena exemplify this type. Description frequently serves subordinate functions within narratives or expositions.

Expository (or informative) texts explain concepts, processes, or phenomena, aiming at knowledge transfer. They utilize definitions, classifications, cause-effect relations, and exemplification. Academic articles, encyclopedia entries, and textbooks belong here. Linguistic markers include present-tense general statements, logical connectors (*therefore, consequently*), and metatextual signals (*first, in addition*).

Argumentative (or persuasive) texts seek to convince the receiver of a particular viewpoint through reasoning, evidence, and counter-argumentation. They characteristically employ modal verbs, evaluative lexis, concession structures (*although, nevertheless*), and rhetorical questions. Editorials, essays, political speeches, and academic debates illustrate this type.

Instructional (or procedural) texts guide the receiver in performing actions. They feature imperative mood, numbered steps, conditional clauses, and goal-oriented lexis. Recipes, user manuals,

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assembly instructions, and laboratory protocols are prototypical. [12] Werlich and later scholars note that instruction often combines with description (of materials) and exposition (of principles).

These five types are idealizations; actual texts are frequently hybrid. A news article may contain narrative elements (event recount), descriptive passages (scene setting), and expository background. Genre theory, particularly within Systemic Functional Linguistics, further refines classification by treating genres as staged, goal-oriented social processes (e.g., recount, report, explanation, discussion) realized through specific schematic structures and lexicogrammatical choices.

Additional dimensions of classification include:

- **Mode**: spoken versus written (with intermediate categories such as scripted speech or computer-mediated communication).
- **Medium and channel**: print, digital, multimodal (combining language with image, sound, gesture).
- **Literary versus non-literary**: literary texts exploit aesthetic and defamiliarizing devices; non-literary texts prioritize efficiency and clarity.
- **Register and domain**: scientific, legal, journalistic, advertising, conversational, etc. [11]

Russian text linguistics (Galperin, Turaeva, Moskalskaya) has contributed sophisticated analyses of literary text categories–segmentation, continuum, prospection/retrospection, modality, and integration–while also addressing functional styles (*funktsional'nye stili*). [15]

Text linguistics intersects with discourse analysis (Brown & Yule), critical discourse analysis (van Dijk's later work), stylistics, pragmatics, and cognitive linguistics. The distinction between "text grammar" (formal modeling of textual structures, associated with early van Dijk) and "text linguistics" (procedural, communicative focus of Beaugrande & Dressler) reflects ongoing methodological debates. [14]

In language education, awareness of text types enhances reading comprehension, writing instruction, and translation. Translators must recognize how cohesion and coherence are realized differently across languages and genres. In the digital age, new text types–hypertexts, tweets, chat dialogues, AI-generated content–challenge and extend classical categories, requiring updated models of intertextuality and situationality.

The description of text in world linguistics has moved decisively beyond sentence boundaries to encompass the full complexity of communicative events. Foundational frameworks–Beaugrande and Dressler's standards of textuality, Halliday and Hasan's cohesion theory, van Dijk's macrostructures, Werlich's functional typology, and Galperin's structural-semiotic approach–provide robust tools for analyzing how texts are produced, structured, and understood. Text types, whether conceived as five rhetorical modes or as culturally situated genres, reveal the purposeful organization of language in social life. As communication continues to evolve through multimodal and digital channels, the insights of text linguistics remain indispensable for scholars, educators, and practitioners seeking to understand and master the art of meaningful textual interaction.

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