QUANTITATIVE CORPUS-BASED INVESTIGATION OF THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL STATUS OF CHARACTERS IN NARRATIVE TEXTS ABOUT HISTORY[1]

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Abstract

The paper investigates how the epistemological status of discourse characters is construed in narrative texts about history. Epistemological status is a property of characters which is determined by the degree of mental access of the character to the factual world of the narrative. The first half of the paper describes the three types of cognition associated with characters by means of Fauconnier's theory of mental spaces: knowledge, thought and the lack of knowledge. The second half of the paper presents a quantitative study of the epistemological status of 17 historical figures and 12 nations. The corpus of the research consists of American texts on Google Books written between 2000 and 2010. The investigation focuses on the frequency of the following collocations expressing knowledge, thought and the lack of knowledge: name of person/nation + knew, name of person/nation + thought, name of person/nation + did not know, name of person/nation + knew nothing. The proportions of the occurrences of the collocations in the cases of historical figures and nations do not show remarkable differences, which means that the construal of the epistemological status of historical figures and nations follows the same general schema. I also compared the frequencies of the conceptualisations of cognition related to nations with the frequencies experienced in the case of historical figures. The results show that the frequency in the case of nations is not less than in the case of historical figures.

Keywords: historiography, narratology, construal, epistemological status, mental space theory, cognitive factive verbs, corpus

1. Introduction

The goal of the paper is to examine how the narrator construes the epistemological status of discourse characters in non-fictional narrative texts about history. The epistemological status of characters is related to the characters' cognition. It is a property of characters which is determined by the degree of mental access of the character to the factual world of the narrative. In Section 2, I briefly sketch the functional cognitive linguistic approach to non-fictional narrative texts about history. Section 3 describes the three types of cognition of characters by means of Fauconnier's theory of mental spaces: knowledge, thought and the lack of knowledge. In Section 4, using the categories set up in Section 3, I show through a quantitative corpus-based investigation that the construal of the epistemological status of historical figures is motivated

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by a well definable general schema. The corpus is the American texts of Google Books written between 2000 and 2010. In Section 5, I extend the quantitative investigation to nations and show that the construal of the epistemological status of nations is motivated by the same general schema as in the case of historical figures. In Section 6, I examine the question whether the frequency of the conceptualizations of cognition related to nations differs from what we find in the case of historical figures. Section 7 briefly summarises the results of the paper.

2. The functional cognitive approach to non-fictional narrative texts about history

My analysis of discourses about history is based on the functional pragmatic model elaborated by Tátrai (2011), which emphasises the intersubjective, shared and perspectivised nature of language. In this framework, language use is interpreted as a social activity whose goal is to share our experiences and coordinate our actions (see also Croft 2009). Every language activity involves a speaker and a recipient who participate in a joint attentional scene. In the intersubjective use of language, the speaker adopts linguistic symbols to direct the attention of the recipient to a referential scene, i.e. to a linguistically represented scene of the world. The linguistic symbols used by the speaker construe the referential scene from a certain viewpoint. In other words, they construe the referential scene in a way that highlights certain aspects and hides other aspects of it (see also Sinha 1999, 2001; Tomasello 1999; Verhagen 2007; Langacker 2008: 55–89). As defined by Langacker, "[c]onstrual is our multifaceted capacity to conceive and portray the same situation in alternate ways" (Langacker 2007: 435). The functional cognitive approach also emphasises the importance of context in language use (Tátrai 2004, 2011: 51–67; Brisard 2002; Langacker 2008: 259–309). Context consists of the physical, social and mental worlds of the speech event. The mental world embodies the discourse participants' knowledge about the topic of discourse. This knowledge is activated in the form of scripts and frames during the interpretation and creation of discourses.

Discourses about history are created and interpreted in a speech event where usually the recipient is in a different space and time than the speaker. The writer by means of linguistic symbols directs the reader's attention to referential scenes of the past which are assumed to be non-fictional. The linguistic symbols used by the writer construe the scenes of the past in a certain way, i.e. they highlight certain aspects and hide other aspects of it. In the course of the creation and interpretation of the discourse, the participants of the interaction activate numerous scripts and frames. The activated scripts and frames acquired from earlier discourses about history can concern the specific topic of the discourse as well as general, mostly culturally inherited ideas about the "course of history".

Discourses concerning the non-fictional presentation of past events activate a factual narrative schema. An important characteristic of the factual narrative schema is the deictic connection – based on spatial and temporal contiguity – between the speech event and the referential scene, in other words it is assumed that the narrated events and the speech event pertain to the same world (for more on the factual narrative schema, see Tátrai 2013). The narrator of a factual narrative has access to the world of the narrative only from his restricted cognitive perspective, which means that as opposed to an omniscient (all-knowing) narrator s/he can report only those things which s/he has experienced or inferred from her/his experiences. Naturally, in the case of narratives about history, experiences and inferences are based on historical sources and on other historians' texts. It is worth noting that fictional texts can also apply this factual schema of narratives (cf. Tátrai 2011: 176–188). In these cases the writer construes a restricted cognitive perspective for the narrator which can simulate spatial

and temporal contiguity between the fictive speech event and the fictive narrated events. Consequently, from the restricted cognitive perspective of the narrator it does not follow necessarily that the narrative is non-fictional. In deciding whether a narrative is a fictional or non-fictional representation of the past, paratexts and further culturally inherited schemas activated in the course of discourse and typically related to fictional and non-fictional narratives can serve as guidelines.

In the social cognitive framework, narrative is not only a mode of text formation with a long tradition but also a form of thinking which represents experiences in a specific way, emphasising the temporal relations between events (on narrative thinking see e.g. Bruner 1986; Brown 1994; Carr 1997; László 2005; Tátrai 2006, 2011: 171–189). Non-fictional narratives about history can be seen as extensions of the narrative schema motivating patterns of thought about everyday life. The extension of the narrative schema of everyday life concerns many aspects of narratives. In this paper, I refer only to the three most important aspects: time, space and characters. While in narratives of everyday life, time and space are usually more local and they are close to the time and space of the speech event, narratives about history often concern a longer period and a more global space of the past. While the characters of everyday narratives are persons, the characters of narratives about history may be abstract entities such as nations, armies and states as well. These abstract entities are construed in a similar way as persons in everyday narratives: they perform actions motivated by various kinds of emotions, thoughts, goals, etc. (cf. Lakoff 1991).

3. The three types of cognition associated with characters

Tátrai (2011: 171–189) differentiates between three spheres of a narrative: the physical world, the social world and the mental world. In this paper, I focus on the mental world of narratives. The mental world is created by the linguistic representations of mental states and processes of characters. One of the principal components of a narrative's mental world is the way its characters' cognition is represented. Conceptualisations of the characters' cognition ususally involve perspectivisation. Perspectivisation is the moving of the subject of consciousness from the speaker to a character. The subject of consciousness "is the subject, either the speaker or the character in the discourse, to whom the responsibility for the information is attributed" (Sanders–Spooren 1997: 87, see also Sanders–Redeker 1996; Tátrai 2011).

Linguistic elements moving the subject of consciousness from the speaker to a character can be analysed as space builders in Fauconnier's theory of mental spaces (Fauconnier 1985, see also Sweetser–Fauconnier 1996; Fauconnier 2007). Space builders are linguistic expressions which set up new mental spaces in discourse. "Mental spaces are very partial assemblies constructed as we think and talk for purposes of local understanding and action. They contain elements and are structured by frames and cognitive models" (Fauconnier 2007: 351). Space builders open new mental spaces derived from a base space. In the case at hand, the base space is the narrator's reality, i.e. the factual world of the narrative. The factual world of the narrative could contain elements from the physical, the social and the mental world of the narrative as well. The moving of the subject of consciousness from the narrator to the characters sets up new mental spaces with different factual status in relation to the base space.

The narrator can conceptualise the characters' cognition in three ways: as knowledge, as thoughts and as the lack of knowledge. The mode of conceptualisation is determined by the type of space builder. In what follows, I show through some examples how we can analyse

the three types of cognition in Fauconniers' theory of mental spaces. The utterances investigated here have been found in the corpus of Google Books.

In utterance (1), the narrator conceptualises Augustus's cognition as knowledge.

> (1) Augustus knew that the administration of such a vast domain could not remain in the hands of a self-electing and centralized group of Roman citizens (McCarty, Nick 2008. *Rome. The greatest empire of the ancient world*. New York: The Rosen. 80.)

In utterance (1), the subject of consciousness is moved from the narrator to Augustus by the cognitive factive verb *knew*. In the case of factive verbs we take the truth of the state of affairs expressed in the subordinate clause as given (Kiefer 1983: 192, see also Declerck 2011: 41). The verb *knew* functioning as space builder sets up a new mental space embedded in the base space, i.e. in the factual world of the narrative. The new mental space represents Augustus's mental world. In this case Augustus's mental world contains the belief that the administration of the Roman Empire cannot remain in the hands of a self-electing and centralised group of Roman citizens. By using the factive verb, the narrator conceptualises this state of affairs not only as part of Augustus's belief, but also as part of the narrator's reality, i.e. the factual world of the narrative. This latter, implicit meaning is the factive presupposition of the sentence. The semantic structure of sentences triggering presuppositions can be described as a figure-ground relationship (Marmaridou 2000: 142–149). While the explicit statement about the mental world of Augustus is in the foreground of attention, the factive presupposition triggered by the factive verb – namely the implicit information that the circumstances conceptualised as part of Augustus's mental world exist in the factual world of the narrative as well – is in the background of attention. We can also say that the narrator conceptualises the mental world of Augustus as part of the referential scene, in other words it is construed objectively, whereas the narrator's own mental processes – the view that Augustus's assessment is in accordance with the factual world of the narrative – are construed subjectively (on objective and subjective construal, see Langacker 2006: 77–78, 260–64; Kugler 2013). Figure 1 represents the mental space configuration of utterance (1):
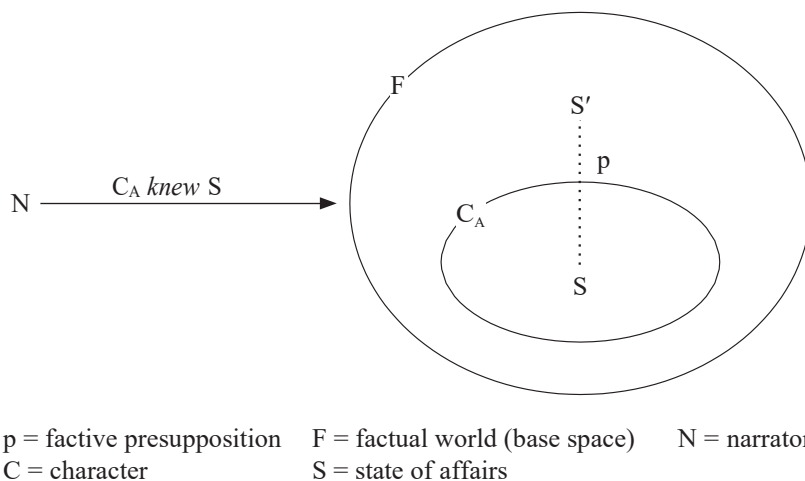

p = factive presupposition   F = factual world (base space)   N = narrator
C = character   S = state of affairs

Figure 1: The mental space configuration of knowledge

N represents the narrator who construes a referential scene by utterance (1). Above the arrow I have marked the space builder which sets up the mental space configuration of the utterance. The circle marked by F represents the base space, i.e. the factual world of the narrative. The smaller circle marked by C_A represents the new mental space related to Augustus's mental world. S in circle C_A shows that the state of affairs related to the administration of the Roman Empire exists in Augustus's mental world. S' in the base space shows that this state of affairs is conceptualised as part of the factual world of the narrative as well. The dotted line marked by p shows the connection of the state of affairs in space C_A and space F triggered by the factive verb.

In utterance (2), the narrator conceptualises the Romans' cognition as thought.

(2) The Romans thought they were attacked by the entire Carthaginian army, and ran away (Tarassov, Vladimir 2002. *The art of management fighting*. Tallinn: Kvibek Trade. 113.)

In sentence (2), the subject of consciousness is moved from the narrator to the Romans by the cognitive verb *thought,* which functions as a space builder. The new mental space represents the Romans' mental world in which a state of affairs, namely the attack of the entire Carthaginian army, exists. But contrary to the previous example, this verb is non-factive, i.e. it does not presuppose the existence of the state of affairs in the factual world of the narrative. Therefore we cannot say whether the state of affairs exists in the factual world of the narrative or not. I marked this uncertainty by a question mark. Nevertheless, the use of cognitive non-factive verbs in past tense often implies that the state of affairs does not exist in the factual world of the narrative. Figure 2 shows the mental space configuration of utterance (2).
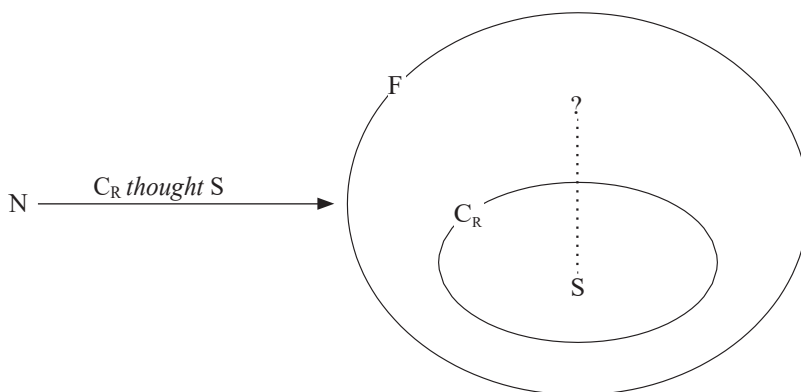

Figure 2: The mental space configuration of thought

In utterance (3), the narrator conceptualises Japan's cognition as the lack of knowledge.

(3) Japan did not know that Josef Stalin had promised Franklin D. Roosevelt at the Yalta Conference in the Crimea in February 1945 that the Soviet Union would join the war against Japan (Auer, James E. – Watanabe, Tsuneo (eds.) 2006. *From Marco Polo Bridge to Pearl Harbor. Who was responsible?* Tokyo: Yomiuri Shimbun. 38.)

In sentence (3), the negated cognitive factive verb *did not know* sets up a new mental space. The new mental space represents Japan's mental world, but in this case the utterance conceptualises Japan's mental world as lacking information about a state of affairs, the promise of Stalin. The S crossed out illustrates that in Japan's mental world the state of affairs does not exist. At the same time, because of the factiveness of the verb, S is conceptualised as part of the base space, i.e. the factual world of the narrative. It is the general property of factive verbs that the negative particle does not cancel the factive presupposition because "the factive presupposition is the presupposition of the speaker, and the listener or the person referred to by the subject of the main clause do not have to necessarily know about this presupposition" (Kiefer 1983: 192). Figure 3 shows the mental space configuration of utterance (3).
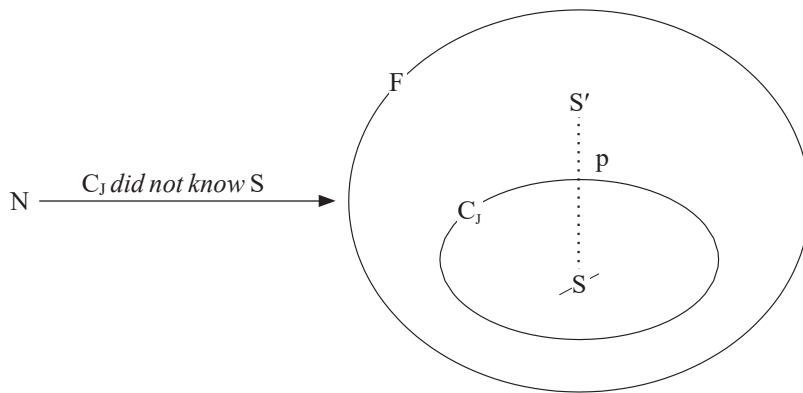

Figure 3: The mental space configuration of the lack of knowledge

The narrator has the possibility to conceptualise the thought of a character through negative construal as we see in example (4).

(4) Churchill did not think that Soviet Russia wanted war (Neillands, Robin. 2003. *Winston Churchill. Statesman of the century.* Cold Spring Harbor, NY: Cold Spring. 196.)

The meaning of utterance (4) is not about the lack of a thought since the sentence means the same as sentence (5).

(5) Churchill thought that Soviet Russia did not want war.

Thus (4) expresses a thought: it is about a state of affairs which exists in the mental world of Churchill, but it does not necessarily exist in the factual world of the narrative. The only difference between (4) and (5) is that in the case of utterance (4) the narrator conceptualises Churchill's thought via negative construal (on the negative construal of thoughts, see Kugler 2014: 61–62)

The above presented examples show that the narrator can conceptualise a character's cognition as knowledge, as thought and as the lack of knowledge. Thoughts can be conceptualised through positive and negative construal as well, but the latter is very rare. The three types of cognition reflect three types of relation between the character's mental world and the factual world of the narrative. These relations are constituted by two factors: 1. whether

or not the given state of affairs is a component of the factual world of the narrative; 2. whether or not the given state of affairs is a component of the character's mental world. In the case of the first factor, the decisive point is the factiveness or non-factiveness of the cognitive verb. When the narrator uses factive verbs, the given state of affairs becomes part of the factual world of the narrative. When the narrator uses non-factive verbs, the state of affairs is not part of the factual world, or it is impossible to say whether it is part of the factual world or not. In the case of the second factor, the crucial point is the presence of the negative particle. In the case of cognitive factive verbs, the presence of the negative particle marks that the given state of affairs is not part of the character's mental world. At the same time, the state of affairs is part of the factual world of the narrative because the negative particle does not cancel the factive presupposition of the factive verb. However, in the case of cognitive non-factive verbs, the construction with negative particle does not express the lack of thought but expresses a thought of a character through negative construal. Table 1 represents the possible relations between the characters' mental world and the factual world of the narrative, i.e. the three types of cognition of characters and the types of constructions expressing them.

type of relation	character's mental world	factual world of the narrative	types of construction
knowledge	the state of affairs exists	the state of affairs exists	cognitive factive verb
lack of knowledge	the state of affairs does not exists	the state of affairs exists	negative particle + cognitive factive verb
thought (through positive or negative construal)	the state of affairs exists	the state of affairs does not (necessarily) exist	cognitive non-factive verb or negative particle + cognitive non-factive verb

Table 1: Types of characters' cognition

4. Quantitative corpus-based investigation of the epistemological status of historical figures

In the second part of the paper I investigate the schemas that motivate the construal of the epistemological status of characters in texts about history. The Hungarian antecedents of the investigation include Tóth–Vincze–László (2006) and Vincze–László (2010) within the framework of narrative psychology. The authors scrutinised the role of narrative perspective in the mediation of identity in Hungarian and Austrian textbooks on history. Applying a quantitative approach, they analysed the types of characters and actions and the types of characters' mental states conceptualised by cognitive and emotional verbs. In my view, the criteria of my investigation based on a distinction between various types of cognition can complement the results of these studies.

The corpus of my investigation was the American texts of Google Books written between 2000 and 2010.[2] For the queries I used the search interface of the site http://googlebooks.byu.edu/x.asp developed by Mark Davies. A character's epistemological status is determined by

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[2] The results of the research reflect the state of the corpus on 19 October 2015.

the degree of mental access of the character to the factual world of the narrative. The narrator construes the epistemological status of characters through conceptualisations of the characters' cognition. In the case of each character, the higher the frequency of conceptualisations of knowledge, compared to conceptualisations of thought or the lack of knowledge, the higher the degree of the character's mental access to the factual world of the narrative.

My preliminary assumption was that the construal of the epistemological status of historical figures would follow different schemas, in other words the frequencies of the conceptualisations of knowledge, of thought and of the lack of knowledge would show remarkable differences across historical figures. Thus on the basis of this assumption, I expected that in the analysed corpus the proportions of the investigated factive, non-factive and negated factive constructions collocating with names of historical figures would vary considerably from one historical figure to the other. The analysed proper names, typically referring to historical figures, are the following in alphabetical order:[3] *Augustus*, *Brezhnev*, *Caesar*, *Charlemagne*, *Churchill*, *Ei- senhower*, *Gorbachev*, *Hitler*, *Khrushchev*, *Lenin*, *Mussolini*, *Nixon*, *Reagan*, *Robespierre*, *Stalin*, *Thatcher*, *Truman*. Table 2 shows the investigated collocations:

type of cognition	type of construction	collocation
knowledge	factive construction	name + *knew* (e.g. *Augustus knew*)
thought	non-factive construction	name + *thought* (e.g. *Augustus thought*)
lack of knowledge	negated factive construction	name + *did not know* (e.g. *Augustus did not know*) name + *knew nothing* (e.g. *Augustus knew nothing*)

Table 2: The investigated collocations

In the case of the name + *thought* constructions, name + *thought of* and name + *thought to be* patterns were ruled out from the investigation. Table 3 shows the results of the queries. The second column shows the number of the occurrences of the name + *knew* factive constructions. The third column shows the proportions of the name + *thought* non-factive constructions to the occurrences of the name + *knew* constructions. Between parentheses I have also given the number of occurrences of each construction. The fourth column in the same way shows the proportions of the name + *did not know* / *knew nothing* negated factive constructions to the occurrences of the name + *knew* constructions. The number of occurrences of the negated factive constructions is given between parentheses. The data of the table were sorted in accordance with the growing order of the proportions of the name + *thought* constructions represented in the third column.

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[3] Naturally in a computer-based quantitative research there could be findings that do not refer to the given historical figure. However, I tried to choose names that would minimize this possibility.

name	name + *knew* (knowledge)	name + *thought* (thought)		name + *did not know / knew nothing* (lack of knowledge)	
Lenin	87	0.24	(21)	0.07	(6)
Gorbachev	73	0.4	(29)	0	(0)
Charlemagne	18	0.44	(8)	0	(0)
Caesar	218	0.45	(99)	0.06	(14)
Reagan	473	0.45	(211)	0.13	(61)
Stalin	416	0.46	(191)	0.04	(18)
Robespierre	8	0.5	(4)	0	(0)
Truman	325	0.54	(175)	0.1	(32)
Churchill	439	0.56	(245)	0.06	(27)
Hitler	658	0.62	(407)	0.16	(102)
Nixon	471	0.64	(303)	0.04	(20)
Eisenhower	350	0.67	(234)	0.09	(31)
Mussolini	51	0.9	(46)	0	(0)
Augustus	51	0.96	(49)	0	(0)
Khrushchev	73	1.19	(87)	0	(0)
Thatcher	25	3.4	(85)	0	(0)
Brezhnev	0		(0)		(0)
mean		**0.78**			
trimmed mean [4]		**0.55**			
median		**0.63**			

Table 3: The epistemological status of historical figures

The table shows that compared to occurrences of the name + *knew* construction, the lowest proportion of occurrences of the name + *thought* construction appears in the case of the representation of Lenin's cognition. At the other extreme of the scale there is Thatcher. In her case the proportion of occurrences of the name + *thought* construction is outstandingly high. Even if we set the non-factive construction and the two negated factive constructions as one category against the factive construction, Lenin and Thatcher are at the two extremes of the scale. In other words while Lenin is represented as a character whose cognition, compared to other historical figures, is in accordance with the factual world of the narrative to a high degree, Thatcher is represented as a character whose cognition is not in accordance with the factual world of the narrative in many cases, or at least we cannot say whether it fits in with the factual world or not. The proportions of occurrences of the two negated factive constructions expressing the lack of knowledge are very low. However, it is

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[4] In this paper the trimming is always 10%.

worth noting that these constructions occur in the highest proportion in the case of Hitler, which reveals typical assumptions related to him.

As we see in the case of Lenin or Thatcher, some of the differences are striking. However, in contrast with the preliminary assumption of the research, similarity between the patterns related to different historical figures is much more dominant than diversity. In most of the cases, 14 out of 16,[5] the name + *knew* construction has a higher share than the name + *thought* construction. The name + *did not know* and the name + *knew nothing* constructions expressing the lack of knowledge occur always in a lower proportion than the name + *thought* construction and the name + *knew* construction respectively. If we suppose that the proportions of the investigated constructions represent the proportions of thoughts, knowledge and the lack of knowledge of characters, then we can draw the conclusion that typically the character's knowledge is more likely to be conceptualised than the character's thoughts, and the lack of knowledge of characters is conceptualised much less frequently than the characters' thoughts. (I emphasise that I did not conduct any research concerning the representativeness of these constructions.)

From the values of the table it is apparent that the patterns of the epistemological status (representation of cognition) of characters are organised by a prototype. One dimension of this prototype can be approached by the measures of central tendency of the proportions of the name + *thought* construction (it is important to note that this is only an approximation because the sample is not random and the number of elements is low). The mean of the proportions of the construction is 0.78, and the median is 0.55. Due to the high idiosyncratic value of Thatcher, the prototype can be better approached by the trimmed mean, excluding the lowest and the highest values, which is 0.63. I pass over the indication of central values of the negated factive constructions.

Since the patterns related to different historical figures are similar, it can be stated, in contrast with the preliminary assumption, that the narrative construal of the epistemological status of different historical figures is motivated by the same general schema, and idiosyncratic schemas related to specific characters appear only in extraordinary cases, for instance in the construal of Thatcher's epistemological status. In other words, in the case of a historical figure the proportions of factive, non-factive and negated factive constructions conceptualising knowledge, thoughts and the lack of knowledge are mostly not specific to that historical figure but rather the consequence of a general schema related to the conceptualisation of a character as mental agent.

5. Quantitative corpus-based investigation of the epistemological status of nations

In the first part of the paper, I presented some examples which show that the characters of history can be conceptualised not only as persons. Many times they are conceptualised in more abstract ways. Armies, governments, nations, states are typical conceptual elaborations of characters of texts about history. However, in many respects these abstract characters are conceptualised in a way similar to human characters: they are mental agents, who have emotio ns, assumptions, goals, etc. Nevertheless we could ask whether the epistemological status of abstract characters is represented analogously to what we find with human characters. To answer the

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[5] Because in the case of Brezhnev I have not found any occurrences of the investigated constructions, I ignore it in the assessment of the results.

question, I investigated the frequencies of occurrences of 12 nations' names collocating with the same factive, non-factive and negated factive constructions as in the previous section. The corpus is the same as well: Google Books, American texts, 2000–2010. The investigated names of nations in alphabetical order are the following: *Americans*, *Austrians*, *Germans*, *Egyptians*, *Greeks*, *Hungarians*, *Italians*, *Mexicans*, *Persians*, *Romans*, *Russians*, *Turks*. Because in the case of the name + *thought* construction, *the English* type names can be adjectives as well, I could choose only from those names which had an -*s* plural morpheme. I also excluded from the investigation those constructions which had an *of* preposition at the beginning, because in these cases the constructions' meaning is not about the cognition of the nation occurring in the construction. Table 4 shows the results of the queries in the same way as Table 3.

name	name + *knew* (knowledge)	name + *thought* (thought)	name + *did not know / knew nothing* (lack of knowledge)
Turks	62	0 (0)	0.08 (5)
Russians	425	0.48 (203)	0.1 (41)
Germans	1074	0.49 (528)	0.14 (155)
Hungarians	22	0.5 (11)	0 (0)
Romans	668	0.53 (351)	0.07 (50)
Egyptians	423	0.56 (237)	0.08 (32)
Italians	115	0.62 (71)	0.05 (6)
Mexicans	92	0.74 (68)	0.05 (5)
Austrians	25	0.76 (19)	0 (0)
Greeks	905	0.81 (730)	0.08 (70)
Americans	1991	1.06 (2116)	0.18 (349)
Persians	25	1.08 (27)	0.12 (3)
mean		**0.64**	
trimmed mean		**0.66**	
median		**0.59**	

Table 4: The epistemological status of nations

The table shows that the proportions of the occurrences of the factive, non-factive and negated factive constructions are similar to those experienced in the case of historical figures. In 10 cases out of 12, the name + *knew* construction expressing knowledge occurs in larger proportion than the name + *thought* construction expressing thought. The name + *did not know* and the name + *knew nothing* constructions expressing the lack of knowledge appear in a much lower proportion than the name + *thought* and the name + *knew* constructions. The central tendency of the proportions of the name + *thought* construction is also similar to what we see in the case of historical figures: the mean is 0.64, the trimmed mean excluding the two extremes is 0.66 and the median is 0.59. On the basis of these results, we can draw the conclusion that the construal of the epistemological status of nations and historical figures does not show remarkable differences, which means that in the two cases we probably activate the same general schema.

It is worth noting that the nation name *Americans* occurs in the second largest proportion in the case of name + *thought* construction and in the largest proportion in the case of name + *did not know / knew nothing* constructions. Probably these proportions are related to the fact that the investigated corpus consists of American texts. It could be the consequence of the American perspective of the writers that the thoughts and the lack of knowledge of the Americans are represented in a more elaborated way than in the case of other nations.

6. The frequency of the conceptualisations of cognition of historical figures and nations

A further question is the frequency of the conceptualisations of cognition of nations in comparison with historical figures. Does the abstractness of the characters influence the frequency of the conceptualisations of cognition? The simplest way to answer the question is to look at the sum of the above investigated factive, non-factive and negated factive constructions in the case of every investigated historical figure and nation and then to compare these values with all of the occurrences of the names of the historical figures and nations (the corpus is the same as previously). The results are shown in Table 5. The second column shows the number of all occurrences of the names of historical figures and nations. The following two columns show the number of the investigated conceptualisations of cognition collocating with the name of the historical figure or nation and the proportion of this value compared to the number of occurrences represented in the second column. The values of proportions are expressed in per thousand. The data of the table were sorted in accordance with the growing order of these values of proportions. The mean, the trimmed mean excluding the two extremes and the median of the proportions are represented at the bottom of the table.

historical figures			
name	**number of tokens**	**conceptualisation of cognition**	
		number	**proportion**
Brezhnev	15738	0	**0‰**
Robespierre	13165	12	**0.91‰**
Charlemagne	28175	26	**0.92‰**
Augustus	106396	100	**0.94‰**
Lenin	81821	114	**1.39‰**
Mussolini	64478	97	**1.5‰**
Caesar	179179	331	**1.85‰**
Gorbachev	53194	102	**1.92‰**
Reagan	317883	745	**2.34‰**
Thatcher	44908	110	**2.45‰**
Khrushchev	55939	160	**2.86‰**
Churchill	242324	711	**2.93‰**
Hitler	393148	1167	**2.97‰**
Truman	178689	532	**2.98‰**
Nixon	266658	794	**2.98‰**

Stalin	180117	625	3.47‰
Eisenhower	164632	615	3.74‰
mean			**2.13‰**
trimmed mean			**2.16‰**
median			**2.34‰**

nations			
name	**number of tokens**	**conceptualisation of cognition**	
		number	**proportion**
Turks	112240	67	**0.6‰**
Persians	54281	55	**1.01‰**
Mexicans	149066	165	**1.11‰**
Hungarians	23429	33	**1.41‰**
Italians	122477	192	**1.57‰**
Austrians	27585	44	**1.6‰**
Americans	2437648	4456	**1.83‰**
Russians	225859	669	**2.96‰**
Germans	491148	1757	**3.58‰**
Romans	295271	1069	**3.62‰**
Egyptians	111980	692	**6.18‰**
Greeks	235789	1705	**7.23‰**
mean			**2.73‰**
trimmed mean			**2.49‰**
median			**1.72‰**

Table 5: The frequency of the conceptualisations of cognition

The proportions show that the frequencies of the conceptualisations of cognition related to nations are not lower than in the case of historical figures. Moreover, in the case of the Egyptians and the Greeks the frequency is much higher than the highest frequency in the case of historical figures. Probably these high frequencies are motivated by the fact that the Egyptians and the Greeks are thought to be culturally significant nations whose world views, ideas are depicted in a wide range of texts.

The results are interesting because one might expect that in the case of less humanlike, more abstract characters the frequency of the conceptualisations of cognition is lower than in the case of historical figures. But on the basis of the results we can assume that the schema motivating the conceptualisation of the characters' cognition is general and strong enough to override the effect of abstractness.

7. Summary

The paper investigated how the epistemological status of characters is construed in texts about history. In the first part of the study, I showed in Fauconnier's framework of mental space theory how the narrator can conceptualise the cognition of characters as knowledge, as thought and as the lack of knowledge. The conceptualisation of knowledge and of the lack of knowledge of characters is symbolised by factive and negated factive cognitive verbs functioning as space builders. The thoughts of characters are symbolised by cognitive non-factive verbs functioning as space builders.

In the second part of the paper, I presented the results of a quantitative corpus-based study. The corpus consisted of the American texts of Google Books written between 2000 and 2010. First I analysed the frequencies of the names of 17 historical figures collocating with the verb form *knew* expressing knowledge, with the verb form *thought* expressing thought and with the verbal constructions *did not know* and *knew nothing* expressing the lack of knowledge. The results showed that the construal of the epistemological status of historical figures is mostly motivated by the same general schema and idiosyncratic schemas related to specific historical figures appear only in extraordinary cases. Then I looked at the proportions of the occurrences of the same verbs and verbal constructions in the case of 12 nation names. The results were similar to those experienced in the case of historical figures, which means that the construal of the epistemological status of nations and historical figures is motivated by the same general schema.

Finally, I examined the frequencies of the conceptualisations of cognition in the case of historical figures and nations. The results showed that despite the abstractness of nations, the frequency of the conceptualisations of cognition related to them is not lower than in the case of historical figures. Moreover, in the case of two nations, the Egyptians and the Greeks, the frequencies are much higher than the highest frequency in the case of historical figures.

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