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A Note on Deep (emic) Structure in Linguistics

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Deep or underlying structure has been basic to much of linguistic thinking since the inception of structural linguistics.

The first breakthrough came with the phoneme concept, particularly as enunciated by Sapir, with its notion of an underlying reality (the phoneme) which is manifested in various forms (allophones).

Following this came the morpheme concept, frequently conceived of as either a basic form from which its other variant forms (allomorphs) are derived, or else conceived of as a deeper reality of which all the allomorphs are manifestations (realizations).

The emic concept became extended to many other areas after this, particularly in tagmemic thinking, though not always clearly relating it to an underlying reality. Sapir-type linguistics with its notion of underlying structures was not in general favor with American linguists for quite a while.

Then with the proposals of Harris and Chomsky in 1957 regarding the possibility of formally relating sentences that contain similar lexical material, the way was opened for an extension of the concept of underlying structure. From tagmemic circles came the concept in 1964, under the term 'clause root', of an abstract underlying structure in sentences, from which related sentences are derived. And in 1965 Chomsky in Aspects... introduced the term 'deep structure' for the underlying structure of a clause or sentence.

The concept of underlying (deep) structure is continuing to be pushed into new areas of language. It is probably coming in the area of sentence (in contrast with clause) structure, as note the sentence batteries by Carole Nevers in this volume of the *Workpapers* (which, though not formally proposing a 'sentence root', may eventually lead to the positing of one). And Pike has proposed the 'plot' as an underlying structure on the paragraph level.

So the idea of deep structure in language is not new but is as old as the science of linguistics, and is still continuing to bear fruit.