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Frame Semantics

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1. Introduction

With the term 'frame semantics' I have in mind a research program in empirical semantics and a descriptive framework for presenting the results of such research. Frame semantics offers a particular way of looking at word meanings, as well as a way of characterizing principles for creating new words and phrases, for adding new meanings to words, and for assembling the meanings of elements in a text into the total meaning of the text. By the term 'frame' I have in mind any system of concepts related in such a way that to understand any one of them you have to understand the whole structure in which it fits; when one of the things in such a structure is introduced into a text, or into a conversation, all of the others are automatically made available. I intend the word 'frame' as used here to be a general cover term for the set of concepts variously known, in the literature on natural language understanding, as 'schema', 'script', 'scenario', 'ideational scaffolding', 'cognitive model', or 'folk theory'.¹

Frame semantics comes out of traditions of empirical semantics rather than formal semantics. It is most akin to ethnographic semantics, the work of the anthropologist who moves into an alien culture and asks such questions as, 'What categories of experience are encoded by the members of this speech community through the linguistic choices that they make when they talk?' A frame semantics outlook is not (or is not necessarily) incompatible with work and results in formal semantics; but it differs importantly from formal semantics in emphasizing the continuities, rather than the discontinuities, between language and experience. The ideas I will be presenting in this paper represent not so much a genuine theory of empirical semantics as a set of warnings about the kinds of problems such a theory will have to deal with. If we wish, we can think of the remarks I make as 'pre-formal' rather than 'non-formalist'; I claim to be listing, and as well as I can to be describing, phenomena which must be well understood and carefully described before serious formal theorizing about them can become possible.

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In the view I am presenting, words represent categorizations of experience, and each of these categories is underlain by a motivating situation occurring against a background of knowledge and experience. With respect to word meanings, frame semantic research can be thought of as the effort to understand what reason a speech community might have found for creating the category represented by the word, and to explain the word's meaning by presenting and clarifying that reason.

An analogy that I find helpful in distinguishing the operation and the goals of frame semantics from those of standard views of compositional semantics is between a grammar and a set of tools—tools like hammers and knives, but also like clocks and shoes and pencils. To know about tools is to know what they look like and what they are made of—the phonology and morphology, so to speak—but it is also to know what people use them for, why people are interested in doing the things that they use them for, and maybe even what kinds of people use them. In this analogy, it is possible to think of a linguistic text, not as a record of 'small meanings' which give the interpreter the job of assembling these into a 'big meaning' (the meaning of the containing text), but rather as a record of the tools that somebody used in carrying out a particular activity. The job of interpreting a text, then, is analogous to the job of figuring out what activity the people had to be engaged in who used these tools in this order.

2. A Private History of the Concept 'Frame'

I trace my own interest in semantic frames through my career-long interest in lexical structure and lexical semantics. As a graduate student (at the University of Michigan in the late fifties) I spent a lot of time exploring the co-occurrence privileges of words, and I tried to develop distribution classes of English words using strings of words or strings of word classes as the 'frames' within which I could discover appropriate classes of mutually substitutable elements. This way of working, standard for a long time in phonological and morphological investigations, had been developed with particular rigor for purposes of syntactic description by Charles Fries (Fries 1952) and played an important role in the development of 'tagmemic formulas' in the work of Kenneth Pike (Pike 1967), the scholars who most directly influenced my thinking during this period. Substitutability within the same 'slot' in such a 'frame' was subject to certain (poorly articulated) conditions of meaning-preservation or structure-preservation, or sometimes merely meaningfulness-preservation. In this conception, the 'frame' (with its single open 'slot') was considered capable of leading to the discovery of important functioning word classes or grammatical categories. As an example of the workings of such a procedure, we can take the frame consisting of two complete clauses and a gap between them, as in "John is Mary's husband—

he doesn't live with her." The substitution in this frame of BUT and YET suggests that these two words have (by this diagnostic at least) very similar functions; insertion of MOREOVER or HOWEVER suggest the existence of conjunctions functioning semantically similarly to BUT and YET but requiring sentence boundaries. The conjunctions AND and OR can meaningfully be inserted into the frame, but in each case (and in each case with different effect) the logical or rhetorical 'point' of the whole utterance differs importantly from that brought about by BUT or YET. In each of these cases, what one came to know about these words was the kind of structures with which they could occur and what function they had within those structures.

In the early sixties, together with William S-Y. Wang and eventually D. Terence Langendoen and a number of other colleagues, I was associated with the Project on Linguistic Analysis at the Ohio State University. My work on that project was largely devoted to the classification of English verbs, but now not only according to the surface-syntactic frames which were hospitable to them, but also according to their grammatical 'behavior', thought of in terms of the sensitivity of structures containing them to particular grammatical 'transformations.' This project was wholeheartedly transformationalist, basing its operations at first on the earliest work on English transformational grammar by Chomsky (1957) and Lees (1961), and in its later stages on advances within the theory suggested by the work of Peter Rosenbaum (Rosenbaum 1967) and the book which established the standard working paradigm for transformationalist studies of English, Chomsky (1965). What animated this work was the belief that discoveries in the 'behavior' of particular classes of words led to discoveries in the structure of the grammar of English. This was so because it was believed that the distributional properties of individual words discovered by this research could only be accommodated if the grammar of the language operated under particular working principles. My own work from this period included a small monograph on indirect object verbs (Fillmore 1961) and a paper which pointed to the eventual recognition of the transformational cycle as an operating principle in a formal grammar of English (Fillmore 1963).

The project's work on verbs was at first completely syntactic, in the sense that what was sought was, for each verb, a full account (expressed in terms of subcategorization (features) of the deep structure syntactic frames which were hospitable to it, and a full account (expressed in terms of rule features) of the various paths or 'transformational histories' by which sentences containing them could be transformed into surface sentences. The kind of work I have in mind was carried on with much greater thoroughness by Fred Householder and his colleagues at Indiana University (Householder et al 1964), and with extreme care and sophistication by Maurice Gross and his team in Paris on the verbs and adjectives of French (Gross 1975).

In the late sixties I began to believe that certain kinds of groupings of verbs and classifications of clause types could be stated more meaningfully if the structures with which verbs were initially associated were described in terms of the semantic roles of their associated arguments. I had become aware of certain American and European work on dependency grammar and valence theory, and it seemed clear to me that what was really important about a verb was its 'semantic valence' (as one might call it), a description of the semantic role of its arguments. Valence theory and dependency grammar did not assign the same classificatory role to the 'predicate' (or 'VP') that one found in transformationalist work (see, e.g., Tesnière 1959); the kind of semantic classifications that I needed could be made more complete and sensible, I believed, if, instead of relying on theoretically separate kinds of distributional statements such as 'strict subcategorization features' and 'selectional features,' one could take into account the semantic roles of all arguments of a predication, that of the 'subject' being simply one of them. Questioning, ultimately, the relevance of the assumed basic immediate-constituency cut between subject and predicate, I proposed that verbs could be seen as basically having two kinds of features relevant to their distribution in sentences: the first a deep-structure valence description expressed in terms of what I called 'case frames', the second a description in terms of rule features. What I called 'case frames' amounted to descriptions of predicating words that communicated such information as the following: 'Such-and-such a verb occurs in expressions containing three nominals, one designating an actor who performs the act designated by the verb, one designating an object on which the actor's act has a state-changing influence, and one designating an object through the manipulation of which the actor brings about the mentioned state change.' In symbols this statement could be represented as [— A P I], the letters standing for 'Agent', 'Patient' and 'Instrument'. Actually, the kind of description I sought distinguished 'case frames' as the structures in actual individual sentences in which the verbs could appear from 'case frame features' as representations of the class of 'case frames' into which particular verbs could be inserted. In the description of 'case frame features' it was possible to notice which of the 'cases' were obligatory, which were optional, what selectional dependencies obtained among them, and so on (see Fillmore 1968).

We were developing a kind of mixed syntactic-semantic valence description of verbs, and we noticed that the separate valence patterns seemed to characterize semantic types of verbs, such as verbs of perception, causation, movement, etc. Within these syntactic valence types, however, it seemed that some semantic generalizations were lost. There seemed to be important differences between GIVE IT TO JOHN and SEND IT TO CHICAGO that could not be illuminated merely by showing what syntactic rules sepa-

rate GIVE from SEND, just as there seemed to be semantic commonalities between ROB and STEAL, BUY and SELL, ENJOY and AMUSE, etc., which were lost in the syntactic class separation of these verbs.

My ultimate goal in this work in 'case grammar' (as the framework came to be called) was the development of a 'valence dictionary' which was to differ importantly from the kinds of valence dictionaries appearing in Europe (e.g., Helbig and Schenkel 1973) by having its semantic valence taken as basic and by having as much as possible of its syntactic valence accounted for by general rules. (Thus, it was not thought to be necessary to explain, in individual lexical entries, which of the arguments in a [V A P I] predication of the type described above was to be the subject and which was to be the object, since such matters were automatically predicted by the grammar with reference to a set of general principles concerning the mapping from configurations of semantic cases into configurations of grammatical relations.)

Although the concept of 'frame' in various fields within cognitive psychology appears to have origins quite independent of linguistics, its use in case grammar was continuous, in my own thinking, with the use to which I have put it in 'frame semantics'; In particular, I thought of each case frame as characterizing a small abstract 'scene' or 'situation', so that to understand the semantic structure of the verb it was necessary to understand the properties of such schematized scenes.

The scene schemata definable by the system of semantic cases (a system of semantic role notions which I held to be maximally general and defining a minimal and possibly universal repertory) was sufficient, I believed, for understanding those aspects of the semantic structure of a verb which were linked to the verb's basic syntactic properties and to an understanding of the ways in which different languages differently shaped their minimal clauses, but they were clearly not adequate for describing with any completeness the semantic structure of the clauses containing individual verbs.

This theory of semantic roles fell short of providing the detail needed for semantic description; it came more and more to seem that another independent level of role structure was needed for the semantic description of verbs in particular limited domains. One possible way of devising a fuller account of lexical semantics is to associate some mechanism for deriving sets of truth conditions for a clause from semantic information individually attached to given predicates; but it seemed to me more profitable to believe that there are larger cognitive structures capable of providing a new layer of semantic role notions in terms of which whole domains of vocabulary could be semantically characterized.

My first attempt to describe one such cognitive structure was in a paper on 'Verbs of judging' (Fillmore 1971)—verbs like BLAME, ACCUSE,

CRITICIZE—for which I needed to be able to imagine a kind of 'scene schematization' that was essentially different from the sort associated with 'case frames'. In devising a framework for describing the elements in this class of verbs, I found it useful to distinguish a person who formed or expressed some sort of judgment on the worth or behavior of some situation or individual (and I called such a person the Judge); a person concerning whose behavior or character it was relevant for the Judge to make a judgment (I called this person the Defendant); and some situation concerning which it seemed relevant for the Judge to be making a Judgment (and this I called simply the Situation). In terms of this framework, then, I chose to describe ACCUSE as a verb usable for asserting that the Judge, presupposing the badness of the Situation, claimed that the Defendant was responsible for the Situation; I described CRITICIZE as usable for asserting that the Judge, presupposing the Defendant's responsibility for the Situation, presented arguments for believing that the Situation was in some way blameworthy. The details of my description have been 'criticized' (see esp. McCawley 1975), but the point remains that we have here not just a group of individual words, but a 'domain' of vocabulary whose elements somehow presuppose a schematization of human judgment and behavior involving notions of worth, responsibility, judgment, etc., such that one would want to say that nobody can really understand the meanings of the words in that domain who does not understand the social institutions or the structures of experience which they presuppose.

A second domain in which I attempted to characterize a cognitive 'scene' with the same function was that of the 'commercial event' (see Fillmore 1977b). In particular, I tried to show that a large and important set of English verbs could be seen as semantically related to each other by virtue of the different ways in which they 'indexed' or 'evoked' the same general 'scene'. The elements of this schematic scene included a person interested in exchanging money for goods (the Buyer), a person interested in exchanging goods for money (the Seller), the goods which the Buyer did or could acquire (the Goods), and the money acquired (or sought) by the seller (the Money). Using the terms of this framework, it was then possible to say that the verb BUY focuses on the actions of the Buyer with respect to the Goods, backgrounding the Seller and the Money; that the verb SELL focuses on the actions of the Seller with respect to the Goods, backgrounding the Buyer and the Money; that the verb PAY focuses on the actions of the Buyer with respect to both the Money and the Seller, backgrounding the Goods, and so on, with such verbs as SPEND, COST, CHARGE, and a number of others somewhat more peripheral to these. Again, the point of the description was to argue that nobody could be said to know the meanings of these verbs who did not know the details of the kind of scene which provided the background

and motivation for the categories which these words represent. Using the word 'frame' for the structured way in which the scene is presented or remembered, we can say that the frame structures the word-meanings, and that the word 'evokes' the frame.

The structures I have mentioned so far can be thought of as motivating the categories speakers wish to bring into play when describing situations that might be independent of the actual speech situation, the conversational context. A second and equally important kind of framing is the framing of the actual communication situation. When we understand a piece of language, we bring to the task both our ability to assign schematizations of the phases or components of the 'world' that the text somehow characterizes, and our ability to schematize the situation in which this piece of language is being produced. We have both 'cognitive frames' and 'interactional frames', the latter having to do with how we conceptualize what is going on between the speaker and the hearer, or between the author and the reader. By the early seventies I had become influenced by work on speech acts, performativity, and pragmatics in general, and had begun contributing to this field in the form of a number of writings on presuppositions and deixis (see, e.g., Fillmore 1975). Knowledge of deictic categories requires an understanding of the ways in which tenses, person marking morphemes, demonstrative categories, etc., schematize the communicating situation; knowledge of illocutionary points, principles of conversational cooperation, and routinized speech events, contribute to the full understanding of most conversational exchanges. Further, knowing that a text is, say, an obituary, a proposal of marriage, a business contract, or a folktale, provides knowledge about how to interpret particular passages in it, how to expect the text to develop, and how to know when it is finished. It is frequently the case that such expectations combine with the actual material of the text to lead to the text's correct interpretation. And once again this is accomplished by having in mind an abstract structure of expectations which brings with it roles, purposes, natural or conventionalized sequences of event types, and all the rest of the apparatus that we wish to associate with the notion of 'frame'.

In the mid-seventies I came into contact with the work of Eleanor Rosch (Rosch 1973) and that of Brent Berlin and Paul Kay (Berlin and Kay 1969) and began to see the importance of the notion of 'prototype' in understanding the nature of human categorization. Through the work of Karl Zimmer (Zimmer 1971) and Pamela Downing (Downing 1977) on the relevance of categorizing contexts to principles of word-formation and, in work that reflects fruitful collaboration with Paul Kay and George Lakoff, I began to propose descriptions of word meanings that made use of the prototype notion. One generalization that seemed valid was that very often the frame or background against which the meaning of a word is defined and under-

stood is a fairly large slice of the surrounding culture, and this background understanding is best understood as a 'prototype' rather than as a genuine body of assumptions about what the world is like. It is frequently useful, when trying to state truth conditions for the appropriateness of predicating the word of something, to construct a simple definition of the word, allowing the complexity of fit between uses of the word and real world situations to be attributed to the details of the prototype background frame rather than to the details of the word's meaning. Thus we could define an ORPHAN as a child whose parents are no longer living, and then understand the category as motivated against a background of a particular kind: in this assumed background world, children depend on their parents for care and guidance and parents accept the responsibility of providing this care and guidance without question; a person without parents has a special status, for society, only up to a particular age, because during this period a society needs to provide some special way of providing care and instruction. The category ORPHAN does not have 'built into it' any specification of the age after which it is no longer relevant to speak of somebody as an orphan, because that understanding is a part of the background prototype; a boy in his twenties is generally regarded as being able to take care of himself and to have passed the age where the main guidance is expected to come from his family. It is that background information which determines the fact that the word ORPHAN would not be appropriately used of such a boy, rather than information that is to be separately built into a description of the word's meaning. In the prototype situation, an orphan is seen as somebody deserving of pity and concern; hence the point of the joke about the young man on trial for the murder of his parents who asked the court for mercy on the grounds that he was an orphan: the prototype scene against which society has a reason to categorize some children as orphans does not take into account the case in which a child orphans himself.

As a second example of a category that has to be fitted onto a background of institutions and practices we can consider the word BREAKFAST. To understand this word is to understand the practice in our culture of having three meals a day, at more or less conventionally established times of the day, and for one of these meals to be the one which is eaten early in the day, after a period of sleep, and for it to consist of a somewhat unique menu (the details of which can vary from community to community). What is interesting about the word BREAKFAST is that each of the three conditions most typically associated with it can be independently absent still allowing native speakers to use the word. The fact that someone can work through the night without sleep, and then at sun-up have a meal of eggs, toast, coffee and orange juice, and call that meal 'breakfast', shows clearly that the 'post-sleep' character of the category is not criterial; the fact that someone can

sleep through the morning, wake up at three o'clock in the afternoon, and sit down to a meal of eggs, toast, coffee and orange juice, and call that meal 'breakfast', shows that the 'early morning' character of the category is also not criterial; and lastly, the fact that a person can sleep through the night, wake up in the morning, have cabbage soup and chocolate pie 'for breakfast', shows that the 'breakfast menu' character of the concept is also not criterial. (This in spite of the fact that an American restaurant that advertises its willingness to serve breakfast at any time is referring precisely to the stereotyped breakfast ingredients.) What we want to say, when we observe usage phenomena like that, is not that we have so far failed to capture the true core of the word's meaning, but rather that the word gives us a category which can be used in many different contexts, this range of contexts determined by the multiple aspects of its prototypic use—the use it has when the conditions of the background situation more or less exactly match the defining prototype.

The descriptive framework which is in the process of evolving out of all of the above considerations is one in which words and other linguistic forms and categories are seen as indexing semantic or cognitive categories which are themselves recognized as participating in larger conceptual structures of some sort, all of this made intelligible by knowing something about the kinds of settings or contexts in which a community found a need to make such categories available to its participants, the background of experiences and practices within which such contexts could arise, the categories, the contexts, and the backgrounds themselves all understood in terms of prototypes.

3. Further Illustrations and Some Terminological Proposals

A 'frame', as the notion plays a role in the description of linguistic meanings, is a system of categories structured in accordance with some motivating context. Some words exist in order to provide access to knowledge of such frames to the participants in the communication process, and simultaneously serve to perform a categorization which takes such framing for granted.

The motivating context is some body of understandings, some pattern of practices, or some history of social institutions, against which we find intelligible the creation of a particular category in the history of the language community. The word WEEK-END conveys what it conveys both because of the calendric seven-day cycle and because of a particular practice of devoting a relatively larger continuous block of days within such a cycle to public work and two continuous days to one's private life. If we had only one 'day of rest' there would be no need for the word 'week-end'; one could simply use the name of that day. If we had three days of work and four days of rest, then too it seems unlikely that the name for the period devoted to one's private life would have been given that name. (If the work week is

gradually shortened, the word 'week-end' might stay; but it is unlikely that the category could have developed naturally if from the start the number of days devoted to work were shorter than the number of the remaining days. An acquaintance of mine who works only on Wednesdays, pleased at being able to enjoy 'a long week-end', recognizes that the word is here being used facetiously.)

The word **VEGETARIAN** means what it means, when used of people in our culture, because the category of 'someone who eats only vegetables' is a relevant and interesting category only against the background of a community many or most of whose members regularly eat meat. Notice that the word designates, not just someone who eats plant food, but someone who eats only plant food. Furthermore, it is used most appropriately for situations in which the individual so designated avoids meat deliberately and for a purpose. The purpose might be one of beliefs about nutrition, or it may be one of concerns for animal life; but the word is not used (in a sentence like "John is a vegetarian.") to describe people whose diet does not include meat because they are unable to find any, or because they cannot afford to buy it.

Occasionally one comes upon a term whose motivating context is very specific. One such is the compound **FLIP STRENGTH**, used, I am told, in the pornographic literature business. Some publishers of pornographic novels instruct their authors to include a certain quota of high interest words on every page, so that a potential customer, in a bookstore, while 'flipping' the pages of the book, will, no matter where he opens the book, find evidence that the book is filled with wonderful and exciting goings-on. A book which has a high ratio of nasty words per page has high flip strength; a book which has these words more widely distributed has low flip strength. As I understand the word, an editor of such a publication venture might reject a manuscript, requesting that it be returned only after its flip strength has been raised.

With this last example, it is extremely clear that the background context is absolutely essential to understanding the category. It is not that the conditions for using the word cannot be stated without this background understanding (relative flip strength of novels could easily be determined by a computer), but that the word's meaning cannot be truly understood by someone who is unaware of those human concerns and problems which provide the reason for the category's existence.

We can say that, in the process of using a language, a speaker 'applies' a frame to a situation, and shows that he intends this frame to be applied by using words recognized as grounded in such a frame. What is going on here seems to correspond, within the ordinary vocabulary of a language, to lexical material in scientific discourse that is describable as 'theory laden': the word 'phlogiston' is 'theory-laden'; the reason it is no longer used in serious discourse is that nobody accepts the theory within which it is a con-

cept. That is, nobody schematizes the physical world in a way that would give a reason to speak of part of it as 'phlogiston'.

To illustrate the point with items from everyday language, we can consider the words **LAND** and **GROUND** (which I have described elsewhere but cannot forego mentioning here). The difference between these two words appears to be best expressed by saying that **LAND** designates the dry surface of the earth as it is distinct from the **SEA**, where as **GROUND** designates the dry surface of the earth as it is distinct from the **AIR** above it. The words 'land' and 'ground', then, differ not so much in what it is that they can be used to identify, but in how they situate that thing in a larger frame. It is by our recognition of this frame contrast that we are able to understand that a bird that 'spends its life on the land' is being described negatively as a bird that does not spend any time in water; a bird that 'spends its life on the ground' is being described negatively as a bird that does not fly.

Though the details are a bit tricky, the two English words **SHORE** and **COAST** (not differently translatable in many languages) seem to differ from each other in that while the **SHORE** is the boundary between land and water from the water's point of view, the **COAST** is the boundary between land and water from the land's point of view. A trip that took four hours 'from shore to shore' is a trip across a body of water; a trip that took four hours 'from coast to coast' is a trip across a land mass. "We will soon reach the coast" is a natural way to say something about a journey on land; "we will soon reach the shore" is a natural way to say something about a sea journey. Our perception of these nuances derives from our recognition of the different ways in which the two words schematize the world.

The Japanese adjective **NURUI** is another example of a framing word. Although not all Japanese-speaking informants support this judgment, enough do to make the example worth giving. In the usage that supports my point, **NURUI**, used to describe the temperature of a liquid, means 'at room temperature', but it is said mainly of liquids that are ideally hot. "Kono ocha ga nurui" (this tea is lukewarm) is an acceptable sentence in the dialects that support my point, but "kono biiru ga nurui" (this beer is lukewarm) is not. It will be noticed that the English word **LUKEWARM** does not 'frame' its object in the same way. A cold liquid and a hot liquid can both become lukewarm when left standing long enough; but only the liquid that was supposed to be hot can be described as 'nurui'.

A large number of framing words appear only in highly specialized contexts, such as the term **FLIP STRENGTH** discussed earlier. The legal term **DECEDENT** gives us another example of such context specialization. According to my legal informants (and my available law dictionaries) the word **DECEDENT** is used to identify a dead person in the context of a discussion of the inheritance of that person's property. (The word **DECEASED**, as in

the phrase 'the deceased', is also limited to legal or journalistic contexts, but it is not limited to any particular subdomain within the law.) Another example is MUFTI. Mufti, in the sense it once had in the military service, refers to ordinary clothing when worn by somebody who regularly wears a military uniform. If we see two men wearing identical suits, we can, referring to their clothing, say that one of them is 'in mufti' if that one is a military officer. The property of being 'in mufti' is obviously a property that has relevance only in the context of a military community.

Given all these examples of clear cases of terms linked to highly specific cognitive frames, we can see that the process of understanding a text involves retrieving or perceiving the frames evoked by the text's lexical content and assembling this kind of schematic knowledge (in some way which cannot be easily formalized) into some sort of 'envisionment' of the 'world' of the text. If I tell you (to be somewhat ridiculous) that the decedent while on land and in mufti last weekend ate a typical breakfast and read a novel high in flip strength, you know that I am talking about a now-dead naval officer who during the period including last Saturday and Sunday read a pornographic novel; and you know a few other things about the man, about how he spent his time, and about the setting in which this report of his activities is given. The sentence did not give you this information directly; you had to 'compute' some of it by constructing, in your imagination, a complex context within which each of the lexically signaled framings was motivated. We see in this way that there is a very tight connection between lexical semantics and text semantics, or, to speak more carefully, between lexical semantics and the process of text comprehension. The framing words in a text reveal the multiple ways in which the speaker or author schematizes the situation and induce the hearer to construct that envisionment of the text world which would motivate or explain the categorization acts expressed by the lexical choices observed in the text.

The interpreter's envisionment of the text world assigns that world both a perspective and a history. A report of somebody buying something evokes the frame of the commercial event, but sees that event, for the moment at least, from the point of view of one of its participants. Describing somebody as being ON LAND locates the scene in the history of a sea voyage, by noticing that it is relevant to describe the location in this way only if this period is seen as an interruption of a period of sea travel. Saying that somebody is AT BAT locates an event as one part of a particular baseball game. Describing coffee, in Japanese, as NURUI recognizes that it was once hot and has been allowed to 'cool'. One knows that the coffee is currently at room temperature, but also that it did not get that way by starting out as iced coffee.

Sometimes the perspective which a word assigns is not a perspective on

the current scene—something that might be visible in a pictorial representation of the scene—but is that of a much larger framework. Thus, the description of someone as a HERETIC presupposes an established religion, or a religious community which has a well-defined notion of doctrinal correctness. In a community lacking such beliefs or practices, the word has no purpose. Sometimes a word situates an event in a history wider than the history of the ongoing narrative. In speaking of locations within North America, the expressions OUT WEST and BACK EAST are frequently used. The terms have the form they do because for a large portion of American families the settlement history of the country traced its way from the east coast to the west coast. European immigrants first landed on the east coast; some of them, or some of their descendants, gradually migrated westward. The eastern part of the country, where these immigrants or their ancestors once were, was BACK EAST; the western part of the country, not yet reached, was OUT WEST. The expressions are used today by people whose families did not share in this general westward movement themselves, but the terms recall the historical basis of their creation.

Earlier I spoke of the notion of deep cases as offering an account of the semantic aspects of single-clause predications which figured in the basic grammatical structure of clauses. A broader view of the semantics of grammar, one which owes a great deal to the work of Leonard Talmy (see Talmy 1980) and Ronald Langacker (Langacker forthcoming), sees lexical framing providing the 'content' upon which grammatical structure performs a 'configuring' function. Thinking in this way, we can see that any grammatical category or pattern imposes its own 'frame' on the material it structures. For example, the English pluperfect can be described as having as its role, in structuring the 'history' of the text world, that of characterizing the situation at a particular time (the narrative time) as being partly explained by the occurrence of an event or situation that occurred or existed earlier on. The progressive aspect, in its turn, schematizes a situation as one which is continuing or iterating across a span of time. Thus, a sentence in a narrative of the form "She had been running," a form which combines the progressive and the pluperfect forms, can have the function of explaining why, at the narrative time point, "she" was panting, or sweating, or tired. Thus we see that the cognitive frames which inform and shape our understanding of language can differ greatly in respect to their generality or specificity: a lexical verb like RUN can give us a specific kind of physical activity image, while the pluperfect and the progressive combine, each in a general and abstract way, to shape the image of running in a way that fits the current situation and to situate the event of running both temporally and in 'relevance' into the ongoing history of the text world.

It is necessary to distinguish two importantly different ways in which the

cognitive frames we call on to help us interpret linguistic texts get introduced into the interpretation process. On the one hand, we have cases in which the lexical and grammatical material observable in the text 'evokes' the relevant frames in the mind of the interpreter by virtue of the fact that these lexical forms or these grammatical structures or categories exist as indices of these frames; on the other hand, we have cases in which the interpreter assigns coherence to a text by 'invoking' a particular interpretive frame. An extremely important difference between frames that are evoked by material in the text and frames that are invoked by the interpreter is that in the latter case an 'outsider' has no reason to suspect, beyond a general sense of irrelevance or pointlessness in the text, that anything is missing. To repeat an example that I have used elsewhere, a Japanese personal letter in the traditional style is supposed to begin with a comment on the current season. Somebody who knows this tradition is able to sense the relevance of an opening sentence in a letter which speaks of the garden floor covered with leaves. The kind of understanding which allows such an interpretation comes from outside of the text itself.

Invoked frames can come from general knowledge, knowledge that exists independently of the text at hand, or from the ongoing text itself.

4. Frame-Semantic Formulations of Empirical Semantic Observations

In this section I examine a number of observations about lexical meaning or text interpretation which permit formulations in terms of notions from frame semantics. In the following section I examine a number of traditional topics in standard semantic theorizing and raise questions about the importance they would be given in an account of linguistic meaning of the sort we have been exploring.

Polysemy Arising from Alternative Framings of the Same Lexical Item

For many instances of polysemy it is possible to say that a given lexical item properly fits either of two different cognitive frames. One possibility is that a word has a general use in the everyday language but has been given a separate use in technical language. For example, we might wish to say that the English word *ANGLE* is understood in connection with a perceptual frame as a figure made by two lines joined at a point in a way suggested by a bent stick. Presented in terms of a competing procedural frame, an angle is thought of in terms of the rotation of a line about a point, the angle itself visually represented as the line before and after its rotation. In the procedural frame the notion of a 180 degree angle is intelligible, as is the notion of a 360 degree angle. Within the perceptual frame such notions do not fit. (The example is from Arnheim 1969, p. 182f.)

Alternate Framings of a Single Situation

From a frame semantics point of view, it is frequently possible to show that the same 'facts' can be presented within different framings, framings which make them out as different 'facts'. Somebody who shows an unwillingness to give out money in a particular situation might be described by one person as *STINGY* (in which case the behavior is contrasted with being *GENEROUS*), and by another as *THRIFTY* (in which case a contrast is made with being *WASTEFUL*). The speaker who applies the *STINGY: GENEROUS* contrast to a way of behaving assumes that it is to be evaluated with respect to the behavior's treatment of fellow humans; whereas the speaker who evaluates the behavior by applying to it a *THRIFTY: WASTEFUL* contrast assumes that what is most important is a measure of the skill or wisdom displayed in the use of money or other resources.

'Contrast Within Frames' versus 'Contrast Across Frames'

The fact that a single situation can be 'framed' in contrasting ways makes possible two ways of presenting a negation or an opposition. Using the contrasts introduced in the last paragraph, if I say of somebody, "He's not stingy—he's really generous", I have accepted the scale by which you choose to measure him, and I inform you that in my opinion your application of this scale was in error. If on the other hand I say "He's not stingy—he's thrifty", what I am doing is proposing that the behavior in question is not to be evaluated along the *STINGY: GENEROUS* dimension but along the *THRIFTY: WASTEFUL* dimension. In the first case I have argued for a particular standard in the application of an accepted scale; in the second case my utterance argues for the irrelevance of one scale and the appropriateness of another.

Word Sense Creation by Frame Borrowing

When a speaker wishes to talk about something for which an appropriate cognitive frame has not been established, or for which he wishes to introduce a novel schematization, he can sometimes accomplish this by transferring the linguistic material associated with a frame which makes the distinctions he's interested in onto the new situation, relying on the interpreter to see the appropriateness of the transfer. Certain new senses of words can be best understood as having originated in this way; we might expect that such was the case in the importation of the term *BACHELOR* into the terminology appropriate to fur seal society, to use the example made common in lexical semantics discussion from the reminder, in Katz and Fodor (1963), of the use of the word *BACHELOR* to designate 'a male fur seal without a mate during the mating season'. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have made us aware of the

value of metaphor in conceptualization and communication, making the persuasive case that in a great many domains of experience metaphors provide us with the only way of communicating about those experiences. (Some details are to be found elsewhere in this volume.)

Reframing a Lexical Set

Various kinds of semantic change can be illuminated by considering the phenomena in frame semantic terms. One important type of change consists in reconstituting the motivating circumstances while preserving the lexical item and its basic fit with the associated scene. People observing certain usages of English with an eye to feminist concerns have noticed tendencies on the part of many speakers to have certain asymmetries in the sets of conditions for using the words in the proportion *BOY:MAN::GIRL:WOMAN*. In particular, in the usage pattern that I have in mind, males appeared to be classified as *MEN* at an earlier age than that at which females are classified as *WOMEN*. A number of people, sensing that this usage pattern revealed attitudes toward females (or a history of attitudes toward females reflected in current conventional usage possibly in independence of the user's own attitudes) which ought to be corrected. A number of speakers have succeeded in modifying their usage in a way which established the age boundary between the *BOY* to *MAN* transition at the same place as that between the *GIRL* to *WOMAN* transition. The semantic change in this case is a real one, which needs to be explained. But it would not be satisfying to see the explanation solely in changes of the meaning of the words *GIRL* and *WOMAN*; the full explanation must assign the change to the underlying schematization on the part of the language user. The realities (of people of both sexes getting older) have not changed, nor have the available choices of linguistic material; what has changed (in some speakers) is the underlying schematization, the circumstances motivating the category contrasts.

Relexicalizing Unchanged Frames

A second kind of semantic change, which oddly can be illustrated with the same words, is one in which the links between words and their frames are changed, but the underlying schematization remains unchanged. The effort to respond to society's new sensitivity to the connections between language and attitudes is perhaps easiest to manage in the short run if it does not require something as deeply cognitive as a reschematization of the domain. A superficial rule-of-thumb for bringing about the appearance of a raised consciousness in the realm of language and sexism is a mechanical principle like "Where I am inclined to say *GIRL* I should instead say *WOMAN*". A person who adopts this rule may find that in most cases it performs very well; but one sometimes finds oneself trapped—as in the ex-

perience of an acquaintance of mine—when talking about very young females; my friend found himself, several times, using the word *WOMAN* when talking about an eight-year-old girl. The fact that this friend would never accidentally use the word *MAN* when talking about an eight-year-old boy shows that the change in question is not of the reschematization type discussed in the previous paragraph. An equally clear example of the same phenomenon (as I have discussed elsewhere—Fillmore 1972) is in the use of the word *SUSPECT* where the speaker or writer might have been inclined to use such a word as *BURGLAR*, *MURDERER*, *ARSONIST*, or more generally, *CULPRIT*. Conscious of the legal doctrine that a person is to be considered innocent until proven guilty, and conscious too of the danger of committing libel, journalists and police officers have learned to identify persons accused of crimes but not (yet) legally held to be guilty of them as *SUSPECTS*. A change in usage which would clearly reflect the adoption of the legal doctrine mentioned above about guilt and innocence as the underlying cognitive frame would not result in some of the frequent mistakes people make in the use of the word *SUSPECT*. The word *SUSPECT* is supposed to be used of a person who is suspected of committing the crime in question; for it to be used appropriately, there has to be some specific person of whom it can be said that that person is suspected by someone of committing the crime. The current journalistic use of *SUSPECT* even when nobody has been accused of the crime shows that the change is of the superficial kind, following the application of a rule of thumb that says, "Wherever I am inclined to say *CULPRIT* (etc.), I should instead say *SUSPECT*." I have in mind such usages as can be found in reports like "Police investigating the murder have found no clues as to the identity of the suspect."

Miscommunication by Frame Conflict

The law provides many contexts in which specific new framings need to be constructed for familiar words. The notion *INNOCENT* mentioned above is an example. In both everyday language and legal language there is a contradictory opposition between *INNOCENT* and *GUILTY*. In everyday language, the difference depends on whether the individual in question did or did not commit the crime in question. In legal language, by contrast, the difference depends on whether the individual in question has or has not been declared guilty by the court as a result of legal action within the criminal justice system. This disparity of schematization is responsible for frequent misunderstandings in the use of these words. An example of such misunderstandings (which I have discussed in Fillmore 1978) was in a conversation between a prospective juror and lawyers in a voir dire hearing in a municipal court in Berkeley. The attorney for the defense asked the prospective juror "Do you accept the American legal doctrine that a man is innocent until

proven guilty?" The citizen answered that a person should be treated as innocent until proven guilty, but that it would be strange to say that he was actually innocent. The attorney asked again, saying, "I'm talking about the doctrine that a man IS innocent until proven guilty. Do you or do you not accept that doctrine?" The citizen answered that if the man IS innocent, then there is no need for a trial. (This rude answer excused the man from jury duty.) This little bit of miscommunicating could easily have been avoided. The citizen was not really being asked whether or not he accepted a particular legal doctrine, but whether or not he was willing to adopt for the purpose of discussion in the trial which was about to start the framing of the words INNOCENT and GUILTY provided by the criminal justice institutions in place of the everyday use of these same words.

Reformulations in Technical Language

Legal contexts give us further ways of seeing changes between general and special-purpose framings of words. In many cases this is because the everyday sense of a word does not cover all cases in which it should be appropriate to use the word. In the prototype case of events fitting the word MURDER, one person (A), intending to kill a second person (B), acts in such a way as to cause that person to die. This prototype does not cover a case in which A, intending to kill B, aims his gun at B, and kills C (who is standing next to B) instead. Some of the properties of MURDER relate A and B; others relate A to C. The question somebody needs to answer, of course, is whether, for the purposes of the law, it is proper to say that A murdered C. The law does this, not by modifying the definition of MURDER so that it will cover this 'wrong-target' case, but by adding to the system of legal semantics a statutory interpretation principle called 'Transfer of Intent' according to which A's intent to kill B is fictitiously transferred to C so that the definition of MURDER can fully fit what A did to C. With respect to judgments of reprehensibility and legal provisions for punishment, A's killing of C should be treated in the same way as A's successful killing of B would have been. The Transfer of Intent principle makes it possible for the non-prototypic case to fall under the same definition.

Other such reinterpretations in the law are equally founded on intentions associated with the prototypical case. The concept of FORCIBLE ENTRY involves one person gaining entry to another person's property by overcoming the resistance of persons trying to prevent that person's entry. The usual definition of FORCIBLE ENTRY, however, includes not only the situation in which the intruder physically overpowers the other, but also the situation in which, as it is usually put, "resistance would be unavailing". If you, being twice my size and strength, insist on being admitted to my apartment, and I meekly let you enter (on the reasonable grounds that if we had a

fight, I would lose), then too you can be charged with FORCIBLE ENTRY. A third example is ORAL AGREEMENT. Basically an ORAL AGREEMENT is a contract or agreement which two parties entered into orally, that is, without putting the agreement in a written form and without signing our names to it. The importance of the notion ORAL AGREEMENT in the law is that the conditions of its authenticity and its bindingness distinguish it from agreements that are fully written out and signed. The critical difference, for the given legal purposes, is the presence or absence of the signatures of the principals. The important part of the contrast, then, is that between being signed and not being signed. Accordingly, provisions made in the law for ORAL AGREEMENTS also apply to written agreements which happen not to be signed. The prototype background in which the notion ORAL AGREEMENT is motivated, is one in which agreements are either made by word of mouth or by means of documents which are written and signed. In situations which depart from the prototype the law has needed to determine which aspect of the prototype contrast is legally the most salient (the presence or absence of the signatures supporting a written document) and let that be the criterion which specifies the contrast.

Frames for Evaluation

One important area in which semantic interpretation depends crucially on lexical framing is that of attributions of value. Evaluative adjectives can contain in their meanings reference to the dimensions, scales, or standards according to which something is evaluated, as with adjectives like FRA-GRANT, TASTY, EFFICIENT, INTELLIGENT, etc. In many cases, however, an adjective is abstractly evaluative (as with the English words GOOD and BAD) and interpretations of their attributive use depend on knowledge of the ideational frames to which they are indexed. The fact that speakers of English are able to interpret such phrases as A GOOD PENCIL, GOOD COFFEE, A GOOD MOTHER, A GOOD PILOT, etc., shows that they are able to call into their consciousness for this purpose the fact that a pencil is used for writing and can be evaluated for how easy or efficient it is to write with it, or how clearly its traces appear on the paper, the fact that coffee is a drink and can be evaluated for its taste, its contribution to the drinker's alertness, etc., that mothers and pilots do what they professionally and conventionally do and can be evaluated for how easily, how effectively, and how efficiently they do it. The point was made earlier that cognitive frames called on to assist in text interpretation may derive from general background knowledge or may be brought into play by the textual context. This is particularly true in the case of the interpretation of evaluative adjectives, since some nouns have frames associated with them whose evaluative dimensions are provided in advance, while others designate things that could be

evaluated only if the context provided some basis for the evaluation. When we come across the phrase *A GOOD STICK* we expect to find in the context some explanation of a situation within which one stick could function better than another (for propping a window open, for repelling a raccoon, for skewering marshmallows, etc.). A general concept of 'framing' involves contextualizing or situating events in the broadest sense possible; within linguistic semantics proper the concern is with patterns of framing that are already established and which are specifically associated with given lexical items or grammatical categories.

Script Evocation

I said earlier about cognitive frames that to speak of one of its elements is to speak of the others at the same time. More carefully put, to speak of one part of a frame is to bring to consciousness, or to raise into question, its other components. This effect is particularly striking in connection with the kinds of frames known as 'scripts', frames whose elements are sequenced types of events. Text understanding that makes use of scriptal knowledge (on which see Schank and Abelson, 1977) involves the activation of whole-scale scripting of events on the presentation of an event that can be seen to part of such a script. Thus, in a textlet like

"He pushed against the door. The room was empty."

we make the two sentences cohere by assuming that the goal somebody might have in pushing against a door is to get that door open, and that if one succeeded in getting the door open by such an act, one could then be in a position to notice whether the room was empty. Reading between the lines, we expand the text to mean:

"He pushed against the door. THE DOOR OPENED. HE LOOKED INSIDE. HE SAW THAT The room was empty."

Frames for Texts

Discussion of text structure on the part of Robert Longacre and others shows that languages or cultures can differ with respect to the ways in which texts with particular communicative goals can have particular conventionalized forms. Recipes in English make consistent use of imperatives. In Hungarian recipes, first person plural descriptions are the norm. And Longacre has described (in conversation) a language lacking in procedural discourse uses narrative form for such purposes. Here it would be difficult to believe that languages differ from each other in the presence of material usable for particular kinds of discourse, it seems rather to be the case that traditions of language use within the culture develop in different ways in texts with different communicative goals.

5. Frame-Semantic Formulations of Issues in Technical Semantics

In this section I examine a small number of topics that one traditionally finds in standard treatises on technical semantics: proportionality, paradigms, taxonomies, syncategorematicity, the supposed contrast between 'dictionary' and 'encyclopedia', the goal of descriptive simplicity and redundancy elimination, and, lastly, the troubled notion of 'lexical presupposition'.

Proportionality

One of the most frequently used heuristic devices for discovering and demonstrating the existence of semantic features in the vocabulary of a language is that of setting up a proportionality involving four words and asking for intuitive agreement about the identity of pairwise differences among them. Believing that man is to woman as boy is to girl, we set up the ratio MAN:WOMAN :: BOY:GIRL. Others frequently used are COME:GO :: BRING:TAKE, LOOK:SEE :: GLANCE:GLIMPSE, INHALE:EXHALE :: SNIFF:SNORT, and MAN:WOMAN :: BACHELOR:SPINSTER. The approach which sees the basic semantic relations as holding among words taken in isolation fails to help us become aware of the possibly quite separate ways in which individual members of these proportions are fitted onto, or frame, their reality. I have already pointed out that in many people's speech the differentiating criterion for BOY vs. MAN might be importantly different from that for GIRL vs. WOMAN; BRING is separate enough in its semantics from COME for it to have acquired quite separate patterns of dialect variation; and the motivation for the categories BACHELOR and SPINSTER appear to be considerably different, in spite of one's inclination, as a systematizer, to put the two words together. One might wish to propose that the abstract structural patterns underlying these word groups are simple and straightforward, in the ways suggested by the proportions, even though certain facts about the world make the domain look less orderly. I think such a proposal is not helpful, because it is not one which asks the analyst to look for the background and motivating situations which separately give reasons for the existence of the individual categories, one by one.

Paradigms

A prime example of semantic structure among lexical items is the 'paradigm'; and the best example of a lexical-semantic paradigm is the kind of display of livestock terms represented by Table 1.

cattle	sheep	horse	swine
cow	ewe	mare	sow
bull	ram	stallion	boar
steer	wether	gelding	barrow

Table 1

Here the proposal that we have a closed system of terms tied together by such features as General, Female, Male, and Neuter, cross-cut by features identifying species (Bovine, Ovine, Equine, Porcine), seems very attractive. Unfortunately the display disguises many facts about both these words and the domain which they appear to cover. CATTLE and SWINE are plurals; SHEEP and HORSE are not. The words WETHER and BARROW are known only to specialists. In the case of CATTLE, COW and BULL appear to have the status of 'basic level objects' (in the sense of Rosch 1973), whereas the general terms have that function in the case of SHEEP and HORSE. In the case of SWINE, a word not in the table, namely PIG, is the best candidate for 'basic level object' status.

In short, the regularities apparent in the paradigm (and this set of terms—together with terms for young, newborn, etc.—make up what is generally accepted as the best example of a semantic paradigm) are misleading. To which we ought to add the Neuter category of the words in the bottom row is not just a 'neutral' category operating in the same line of business as the categories Female and Male. The category is differently motivated in the different species, which is another way of saying that one has different reasons for castrating a bull and a horse, one might do it at different (relative) ages, etc.

Taxonomies

The next most common kind of lexical semantic formal structure is the 'semantic taxonomy', a semantic network founded on the relation 'is a kind of'. Scientific taxonomies have obvious uses in scientific discourse, and research that has led to the uncovering of folk taxonomies has been among the most important empirical semantic research yet done. But there are two aspects of taxonomic structures that argue against regarding them as representing merely a formal system of relationships founded on a single clear semantic relation. The first is that at different levels in a taxonomy the community might have had different reasons for introducing the categories; the second is that the usual tree-form display of the elements of a taxonomy does not show how it is that particular elements in the taxonomy are 'cognitively privileged categories' in important ways. Both of these points can be illustrated with a 'path' in a taxonomy of zoological terms in English, namely

ANIMAL
VERTEBRATE
MAMMAL
DOG
RETRIEVER

Of this set of words, DOG and ANIMAL seem to be the cognitively privileged categories, privileged in the sense that they are the words that would most ordinarily be used when in everyday natural talk one is describing one's

experiences. VERTEBRATE and MAMMAL are terms whose employment fits a particular kind of interactional or contextual schema (that of scientific discourse), while RETRIEVER as a category occurs most naturally as an answer to a question about what kind of a dog one has. Suppose that you, hearing a splash in my back yard, were to ask me what that noise was, and suppose the fact is that my pet retriever fell in the family swimming pool. As a way of explaining the source of the noise, it would be natural for me to say "An animal fell in the pool" or "A dog fell in the pool", but it would be very unnatural for me to say "A vertebrate fell in the pool" or "A mammal fell in the pool", and unnatural in a different way for me to say "A retriever fell in the pool". The latter three terms seem to appear more natural in utterances used in acts of classifying, but seem unnatural when used in acts of referring. This functional difference is not revealed within the logic of a standard taxonomic tree.

Synecategorematic Terms

It has frequently been discussed (e.g., Austin 1964, Lecture VII) that a word like IMITATION does not semantically modify a word it grammatically modifies in the standard 'set intersection' way. Rather, it combines with the meaning of its partner to form a fairly complex concept. Something correctly described as IMITATION COFFEE looks like coffee and tastes like coffee, and it looks and tastes like coffee not by accident, but because somebody manufactured it so that it would have these properties; but, whatever it is, it is not made of coffee beans. Understanding the category, in fact, requires understanding the role of coffee in our lives and (perhaps) the reasons someone might have for making a coffee substitute.

By contrast a word like REAL appears to contribute nothing at all to the noun to which it is attached as a modifier. To describe something as REAL COFFEE is to do nothing more than to assert that something is coffee, against the background of (the possibility of) somebody's suspicion that it is imitation coffee. As with IMITATION, a part of a full understanding of an expression with REAL is knowing the reasons one might have for providing substitutes for the thing in question. The notion REAL COFFEE makes sense to us because we know that in some settings coffee is scarce, and we know that some people find coffee damaging to their health or held offensive by their religion. We can understand a category like REAL GOLD or REAL DIAMOND because we can imagine a reason why somebody might choose to produce fake gold or fake diamonds, and we can imagine why someone might have doubts about the authenticity of particular samples. By contrast, a notion like REAL PANTS is unintelligible, because it is impossible to imagine something looking like pants and functioning like pants which do not, by virtue of those properties alone, count as being genuine

pants.

Redundancy Elimination

A common goal in structural semantics is the elimination or minimization of redundant information in the semantic description of lexical items. Frequently a semantic theorist will declare that the goal of a 'semantic dictionary' is that of saying just enough about each word in the language to guarantee that it is semantically in contrast with each other word in the language (Bendix 1966). It is a goal which presupposes the analyst's ability to have an overview of the entire lexical repertory of the language. Such a goal is completely antithetical to the goals of frame semantics, since frame semantics aims at discovering what categorizing functions the word serves in the contexts in which its use is motivated. This kind of knowledge is in principle attainable independently of knowledge about other words in the language, except for those relatively few cases in which the 'mosaic' image is appropriate, the image by which the meaning given to any one word is dependent on the meanings of its neighboring words (as in Trier 1931).

Dictionary vs. Encyclopedia

The various structuralist approaches that find a goal of redundancy elimination relevant, also find it intelligible to draw a clear distinction between 'dictionaries' and 'encyclopedias'. In particular, certain scholars insist on a distinction between purely semantic information about words and encyclopedic information about the designata of words. Somebody holding this view might expect to be able to justify certain characteristics of carpenters (or the concept CARPENTER) as belonging to the semantic category of the noun, other distinct characteristics of carpenters as simply being true of the individuals who satisfy the criteria associated with the category. A frame-semantic approach would rather say that communities of men contain individuals who by trade make things out of wood, using particular kinds of tools, etc., etc., and would note that these people are called CARPENTERS. The possibility of separating some features of a full description of what carpenters do as related to the concept and others as related to the people does not seem important. There is a distinction to be made between knowledge about words and knowledge about things, but it is not to be made in a way that serves the interests of the semanticists I have just been describing. True 'encyclopedic' information about carpenters as people might say something about wages, union affiliations, job related diseases, etc.; such information is not a matter of dispute.

Simplicity of Description

While in respect to redundancy elimination it has appeared that standard

approaches value simplicity and frame-semantic approaches do not, there is another sense in which simplicity of description is enhanced by the frame semantics approach. A recent lively discussion between Paul Kay and Linda Coleman on the one hand (Coleman and Kay 1981) and Eve Sweetser on the other hand (Sweetser 1981) concerns the possibility of a prototype background of assumptions (or, as Sweetser calls it, a 'folk theory') as providing the grounding for a simplified definition of the noun LIE. On the Kay/Coleman account, a LIE is something which is (1) false in fact, (2) believed by the speaker to be false, and (3) said in order to deceive. Sweetser's suggestion is that if we can characterize a folk theory of human communication involving cooperation, expressing what one believes, etc., then it is possible to describe a LIE as simply a 'false statement', those other understandings we have about the concept falling out through an understanding of why one would bother to produce a false statement.

Presupposition

Claims about 'presuppositional' information being associated with individual lexical items have not received a good press. I find that within frame semantics, the concept of lexical presupposition does not seem unjustified. Consider the case of a verb like English CHASE, a verb for which a lexical presuppositionist might be inclined to say that when it is used of two beings moving in the same course, the movement of the one in front is presupposed, independently of whether the movement of the individual designated by the subject of the verb is asserted, denied, questioned, or supposed. In a setting in which one person is running, especially where it is understood that that person is fleeing, it is relevant to consider whether some other person is or is not going to try to prevent that first person from getting away. (My illustration is with people, but that's not an important condition.) The verb CHASE exists as a category by recognition of such relevance. If I ask, "Did anybody chase him?", or if I say "We didn't chase him", our reason for understanding that 'he' was running (fleeing) is that we know the kind of situation against which the category CHASE has a reason for being. It is in that sense, it seems to me, that one can talk about lexical presuppositions.

6. Concluding Remarks

In this paper I have argued for a view of the description of meaning-bearing elements in a language according to which words (etc.) come into being only for a reason, that reason being anchored in human experiences and human institutions. In this view, the only way in which people can truly be said to understand the use to which these meaning-bearing elements are being put in actual utterances is to understand those experiences and institutions and to know why such experiences and institutions gave people reasons to create

the categories expressed by the words. The semanticist's job is to tease out the precise nature of the relationship between the word and the category, and the precise nature of the relationships between the category and the background. I believe that some of the examples I have offered have shown the advantages of looking at language in this way.

Note

1. For a recent attempt to differentiate these terms, see Beaugrande 1981, p. 303.

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