

Framing in Discourse

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Introduction

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Ever since its introduction by Gregory Bateson in "A Theory of Play and Fantasy" ([1954] 1972), the concept of framing has influenced thinking about language in interaction. Bateson demonstrated that no communicative move, verbal or nonverbal, could be understood without reference to a metacommunicative message, or metamessage, about what is going on—that is, what frame of interpretation applies to the move. Observing monkeys playing, he noted that it was only by reference to the metamessage "This is play" that a monkey could understand a hostile move from another monkey as not intended to convey the hostility that it obviously denotes. In other words, metamessages "framed" the hostile moves as play.

Bateson's work was taken up most directly by researchers in communication and psychology, especially those in systems or family therapy (for example, Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson 1967). It received some attention from anthropologists as well (see especially Frake 1977). Within sociology, the most important and comprehensive treatment of framing came in Erving Goffman's *Frame Analysis* (1974), which provides a complex and subtly nuanced system of terms, concepts, and examples to elucidate the numerous levels and types of framing that constitute everyday interaction.

Although the influence of Bateson's and Goffman's work has been pervasive, there have been few studies directly applying Bateson's seminal theory or Goffman's elaborate framework in microanalytic linguistic analysis of real discourse produced in face-to-face interaction. In his later work, *Forms of Talk* (1981), Goffman's attention to multiple layers of framing in everyday life focused more and more specifically on the use of language, and Goffman became increasingly interested in the work of linguistic discourse analysis. In the chapter entitled "Footing" he observes that "linguistics provides us with the cues and markers through which such footings become manifest, helping us to find our way to a structural basis for analyzing them"¹ (p. 157). Until now, however, linguists have been slow to justify

I would like to thank Neal Norrick and Deborah Schiffrin for comments on a draft of this introduction. I am grateful to Clifford Geertz and the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, for the ideal environment in which to write this introduction.

Goffman's faith in our ability to make framing manifest. I believe that this collection begins to do so.

At the same time that discourse analysis can provide insight into the linguistic means by which frames are created in interaction, the concept of framing provides a fruitful theoretical foundation for the discourse analysis of interaction. In fact, frames theory already lies at the heart of the most comprehensive and coherent theoretical paradigm in interactional sociolinguistics: Gumperz's (1982) theory of conversational inference. Gumperz shows that conversational inference, a process requisite for conversational involvement, is made possible by contextualization cues that signal the speech activity in which participants perceive themselves to be engaged. Gumperz's notion of speech activity is thus a type of frame. Indeed, it is in the work of Gumperz and those influenced by him that one finds the greatest justification for Goffman's belief in the ability of linguistics to elucidate the structural basis for framing. With the possible partial exception of the final chapter by Schiffrin, the articles in this volume derive directly from this research tradition, by way of my training as a student of Gumperz at the University of California, Berkeley. Schiffrin is a more direct descendent of Goffman, with whom she studied at the University of Pennsylvania, though her work also shows the influence of William Labov, as mine also shows the influence of Robin Lakoff and Wallace Chafe.

Genesis of the Volume

Every now and then there is a flowering of intellect and spirit among doctoral students in a graduate program: a critical number of exceptional students appear at a time when the field is experiencing an explosion of interest in a particular subfield, and the department includes faculty members who are full of fire with that excitement. The students and faculty inspire and enlighten each other. This occurred in the graduate program in sociolinguistics at Georgetown University in the mid-80s, when the field of linguistics was experiencing a rise of interest in discourse analysis. The unique placement of Georgetown's Department of Linguistics in relation to the growing field of discourse analysis was the result of two happily coinciding phenomena: the unusual existence of two faculty members working actively in different areas of the same field (Deborah Schiffrin and I)² and the opportunity given us to direct meetings that brought leading discourse analysts to the Georgetown University campus. In 1981 I organized the Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics "Analyzing Discourse: Text and Talk" (see Tannen 1982 for a collection of the papers delivered at that meeting). Three years later, Deborah Schiffrin organized the 1984 GURT "Meaning, Form, and Use in Context: Linguistic Applications" (see Schiffrin 1984 for papers). The year after that, I directed the 1985 Linguistic Institute "Linguistics and Language in Context: The Interdependence of Theory, Data, and Application" (see Tannen and Alatis 1986, Tannen 1988 for papers from that meeting).

In the fall of 1985, immediately following the Linguistic Institute, I taught a graduate seminar on frame analysis. As a direct outgrowth of that seminar, several of the participants wrote dissertations applying frame analysis to discourse produced in a range of contexts. As the dissertations emerged and were uniformly excellent, I realized that the class members were doing, at last, what Goffman had believed it would be the mission of linguists to do. It was then that I conceived the idea for this volume. Frances Smith and Suwako Watanabe were regular members of the seminar who began their dissertations after the seminar ended. Branca Ribeiro, who was already writing her dissertation at the time, was an auditor. The three chapters by these authors are based on their dissertations, which I directed. Although she did not attend the seminar, Susan Hoyle was a member of the same exceptional group of graduate students. Her chapter is condensed from her dissertation, which was directed by Deborah Schiffrin, whose own work is represented here as well. Schiffrin served as reader on the Ribeiro, Watanabe, and Smith dissertations, and I served as reader on Hoyle's. The chapter by Carolyn Strachle was written at a later time, revised from an independent study that had begun as an outstanding paper written for my graduate course in the discourse analysis of conversation.

This volume, then, reflects the recent burgeoning of work and interest in discourse analysis within linguistics. Together, the chapters demonstrate the importance of framing as a theoretical foundation and methodological approach in the discourse analysis of interaction. They also provide insight into discourse types that have not previously been studied by linguists. All the chapters combine to demonstrate how theories of framing can be translated into nuts-and-bolts discourse analysis. Each makes both theoretical and empirical contributions, enriching our understanding of framing at the same time that it shows how analysis of framing adds to our understanding of conversational interaction.

Overview of Chapters

The volume begins with two of my own articles that lay a theoretical groundwork for the analysis of framing in discourse. Although these chapters have been previously published, they appeared in places not normally seen by linguists: the first in a volume edited by Roy Freedle for his psychologically oriented Discourse Processing series, the second in a special issue of the *Social Psychology Quarterly* edited by sociologist Douglas Maynard. The chapters that follow were all written expressly for this volume, each applying aspects of frames theory to a unique interactional context.

Chapter 1, "What's in a Frame? Surface Evidence for Underlying Expectations," provides a general introduction to research on framing. It begins with a theoretical overview of how the term "frame" and related terms such as "script" and "schema" developed and have been used in a range of disciplines to refer to what I define as "structures of expectation." The disciplines surveyed are linguistics, cognitive psychology, artificial in-

telligence, social psychology, sociology, and anthropology. I have not attempted to bring the literature review up to date, because it was not intended as a literature review per se but rather as a review of terms and concepts; as it stands, it still fulfills the purpose of introducing the concept of framing, the various terms that have been used to denote the concept, and the ways in which those terms and concepts have been employed in a range of disciplines. The chapter then reports the results of research examining linguistic evidence for the existence of frames underlying narrative performance in a corpus of stories told by Americans and Greeks about a film (which has become known as “the pear film”). First I discuss the levels at which frames operate; then I illustrate sixteen types of linguistic evidence for the presence and character of cognitive frames.

The type of “frames” that are the subject of analysis in Chapter 1 are what I later came to call “schemas”: “structures of expectation” associated with situations, objects, people, and so on. Goffman (1981:67) noted that this paper concerns types of framing quite different from the sense in which he and Bateson used the term. Chapter 2, and the remainder of the book, focus primarily on the type of frame that Goffman analyzed: the “alignments” that people “take up to” each other in face-to-face interaction.

Chapter 2, “Interactive Frames and Knowledge Schemas in Interaction: Examples from a Medical Examination/Interview,” by me and Cynthia Wallat, suggests a model for integrating these two senses of framing in a single analytic framework. “Knowledge schemas” are the type of framing device discussed in Chapter 1; “interactive frames” are frames in Bateson’s and Goffman’s sense, that is, what people think they are *doing* when they talk to each other (i.e., are they joking, lecturing, or arguing? Is this a fight or is it play?). The interaction of these two types of frames is illustrated by analysis of a videotaped encounter in which a pediatrician examines a cerebral palsied child in the presence of the child’s mother. We show that the frames/schema model allows us to elucidate the complexity of the pediatrician’s verbal behavior in the interaction.

In the episode analyzed, the pediatrician balances several competing and conflicting *interactive frames*: within an “examination frame,” she conducts a standard pediatric examination according to a prescribed routine; within a “consultation frame,” she answers the mother’s questions about the child’s condition, at times examining the child to discover the answer to the mother’s questions; and within a “reporting frame,” she announces the findings of the pediatric examination aloud for the residents who may later view the videotape being made. At times, the demands of these frames conflict. For example, the mother’s questions in the consultation frame require the doctor to interrupt her examination and put the child “on hold,” making her potentially more restless and consequently making the examination more difficult.

At the same time, there are conflicts between the doctor’s and the mother’s *knowledge schemas*—that is, their expectations about health in gen-

eral and cerebral palsy in particular. For example, the mother and doctor differ in their interpretations of the child's noisy breathing. Associating "noisy breathing" with "wheezing," the mother fears that the child is having respiratory difficulty. The doctor, in contrast, associates the noisy breathing with cerebral palsy, i.e., as an expected and harmless result of poor muscular control. A conflict in schemas often triggers a shift in frames. Thus, the mother's concern with the child's noisy breathing leads her to interrupt the doctor's examination to exclaim, "That's it! That's how it sounds when she sleeps!" The doctor must then shift from the examination frame to the consulting frame to reassure the mother that the child's noisy breathing is not a sign of danger.

In Chapter 3, "Framing in Psychotic Discourse," Branca Telles Ribeiro uses the frames/schema model to analyze the discourse of a Brazilian woman, Dona Jurema, being interviewed by a psychiatrist, Dr. Edna, at a psychiatric hospital in Rio de Janeiro. On the basis of this interview, Dr. Edna diagnosed Dona Jurema as being in the midst of a psychotic crisis and admitted her to the hospital. Ribeiro demonstrates that frame analysis elucidates the coherence in Dona Jurema's psychotic discourse. There are two frames operating in the interaction: the interview frame, in which Dr. Edna asks the patient questions, and the psychotic crisis frame, in which the patient fails to answer the psychiatrist's questions, speaking instead *to* people who are not present and *as* people who are not present—even, in some cases, not alive—or as herself at a different age or in a different context. Dona Jurema jumps from topic to topic, chants and sings, and assumes different voices and different footings. Ribeiro shows, however, that everything she utters in the frame of her psychotic episode is perfectly coherent within the scenario created—for example, Dona Jurema as a child speaking to her mother, grandmother, or sister. Ribeiro also examines a lower level of framing and its relation to the higher level: the types of moves performed in Dona Jurema's discourse that make up the various interactive frames. Furthermore, she shows that Dona Jurema makes accurate use of knowledge schemas pertinent to each frame, such as the injunction against making noise in a hospital. Ribeiro's study is exemplary of the power of frames theory to illuminate an otherwise seemingly incoherent discourse type. It is also a ground-breaking analysis of psychotic discourse.

In Chapter 4, "Participation Frameworks in Sportscasting Play: Imaginary and Literal Footings," Susan M. Hoyle analyzes discourse produced by her son and his friends while they played dyadic indoor games, such as video basketball and Ping-Pong, and simultaneously reported on the games they were playing by speaking in the role of sportscaster. The primary basis for Hoyle's analysis is spontaneous sportscasting, which the boys initiated on their own, aware that they were being taped but unaware of which aspect of their talk would be the object of interest. In a second part of the study, the boys staged a more elaborate, multivoiced performance, in which they took the roles not only of sportscaster but also of half-time interviewer and

interviewee for a hypothetical television audience. These more elaborate instances of sportscasting play were performed in response to Hoyle's specific request that the boys "do sportscasting" for her to tape.

Hoyle integrates the concepts of framing and participation structure to show that the boys balance multiple participation frameworks in their sportscasting play. For example, the "outermost frame" of "play" or "fulfilling a request to do sportscasting" is a rim around the embedded frame of "doing sportscasting." In their spontaneous play, the boys shift between speaking as sportscasters commenting on their play and speaking as themselves, for example, to resolve procedural disputes and manage the game. In the elicited sportscasting, they never speak as themselves, but shift among nonliteral frameworks, for example, to move from announcing the action to acting out a half-time interview with a player. Hoyle demonstrates that the analysis of interaction from the point of view of framing leads to "a greater appreciation of children's discourse abilities" at the same time that analysis of children's framing of their play adds to our understanding of the human capacity to manipulate frames in interaction.

Chapter 5, Frances Lee Smith's "The Pulpit and Woman's Place: Gender and the Framing of the 'Exegetical Self' in Sermon Performances," examines the sermons delivered by students in a preaching lab at a Baptist seminary. Focusing her analysis on the "text exegeter" portions of the sermons—that is, the portion in which the preacher explains, or exegetes, a fixed sacred text, Smith finds that the male and female student preachers she taped tended to take different footings in framing their sermon performances and consequently in presenting themselves as exegeters. Referring not only to Goffman's "footing," as the other contributors do, but also to his concept of the "textual self" as described in his essay "The Lecture" (1981), Smith begins by profiling four discernible "exegetical authority" footings, each projecting a distinct textual self. She finds that the men tended to foreground "their textual-self authority both by putting themselves on record as exegeters of the text and by calling attention to the current participation framework in the exegetical task more often than did the women." In contrast, the women use a variety of framing strategies to downplay their personal authority as text exegeters. For example, one woman referred to the text itself as the source of authority, another framed her sermon as a children's story, and another took the footing of a "low-profile" exegeter.

Smith's contribution is significant for the gender and language topic area, as it shows that the level at which women and men differ is not so much (or not so significantly) the matter of lexical or syntactic choice but the far more complex level of footing, that is, the alignment they take up to the material about which they are speaking and the audience to whom they are addressing their discourse. Smith's analysis is particularly significant in providing an innovative and potentially ground-breaking approach to gender differences. Rather than designing her study as a direct comparison of male and female styles, she focuses her analysis on the footings assumed by the

student preachers, the selves projected by these footings, and the linguistic means by which they were created. She begins by developing the categories within which the various footings could be grouped and only then asks where the women and men tend to fall, concluding that women make more use of the linguistic devices that constitute two of the footings. In addition, Smith's chapter makes a significant contribution to the fields of language and religion in general and the language of sermon performance in particular.

In Chapter 6, "Cultural Differences in Framing: American and Japanese Group Discussions," Suwako Watanabe applies frame analysis to issues in cross-cultural communication. Specifically, she addresses the question of why Japanese students in American classrooms find it difficult to participate in small group discussions, a speech activity favored by many American teachers. By comparing American and Japanese small group discussions on similar topics, Watanabe identifies two types of framing: (1) bracketing (delineating the event at its beginning and end), and (2) specific conversational moves such as requesting or joking. Examining the strategies by which participants open and close discussion, present reasons, and structure arguments, she finds that the Japanese students use strategies that grow out of two patterns characteristic of Japanese communication: nonreciprocal language use and avoidance of confrontation. The Americans perceived the group as four individuals bound only by an activity, whereas the Japanese perceived themselves as group members united in a hierarchy. Consequently, the Japanese speakers avoided confrontation by putting forth conclusions that were "inclusive, allowing both supportive and contradictory accounts at the same time." In contrast, the Americans' conclusions were exclusive, leading therefore to some confrontation when individuals' accounts differed.

Watanabe links the level of conversational moves to higher levels of framing. For example, the Japanese gave reasons in the frame of storytelling, whereas the Americans gave reasons in the frame of reporting. Furthermore, in beginning and ending the discussions, the Japanese reflected the hierarchical structure of the group. This observation has interesting implications for the issue of gender. In the Japanese discussion groups, the first to speak was always a woman. Whereas Americans would likely see the first-to-speak position as relatively dominant, Watanabe suggests that in the Japanese framework, speaking is face-threatening to the speaker, so women take this potentially compromising position because they have less face to lose.³ This chapter, then, demonstrates the usefulness of frames theory for illuminating cross-cultural communication and small group interaction. It also adds to our understanding of differences in Japanese and American discourse strategies.

In Chapter 7, "'Samuel?' 'Yes, Dear?': Teasing and Conversational Rapport," Carolyn A. Strachle examines a particular conversational move, teasing, in a naturally occurring casual conversation among three friends: Samuel, Diana, and the author herself. Strachle aptly observes that teasing is a

linguistic analogue to Bateson's playful nip: a move whose obviously hostile meaning is reversed by the frame of play (but is in danger of being perceived as a literally hostile bite). Examining the role of teasing in the relationships among the three participants, she finds, for example, that whereas teasing is pervasive in the interaction, not all participants engage in it equally. Samuel and Diana tease each other incessantly as part of their flirtation and display of mutual affection (they were newly paired), but there is no teasing between Samuel and Carolyn, who is Diana's best friend.

In addition to examining the role of teasing in negotiating relationships, Strachle examines four linguistic cues that frame utterances as teasing: prosody (for example, a high-pitched, whiny voice), laughter (accompanying or immediately following an utterance to signal benign and playful intent), pronouns (a present party is referred to in the third person, as "she," or two parties use the pronoun "we" to exclude a third), and routinized formulae (such as the fixed interchange that provides the chapter's title). Moreover, many of the formats by which Samuel (and, less often, Carolyn) tease Diana are posited on framing her as a child. Teasing is a much noted and little analyzed conversational strategy; Strachle's analysis of its linguistic and interactional components is therefore a significant contribution to an understanding of the act of teasing, as well as to our understanding of framing in conversational interaction.

Chapter 8, Deborah Schiffrin's "'Speaking for Another' in Sociolinguistic Interviews: Alignments, Identities, and Frames," is similar to Strachle's in its focus on a particular interactional move within the context of an interaction in which the author was a participant. Schiffrin analyzes discourse that took place during a sociolinguistic interview she conducted with three members of a lower middle class Jewish community in Philadelphia: a married couple called Zelda and Henry and their neighbor and friend Irene. Schiffrin shows that the previously undescribed conversational move "speaking for another"—that is, voicing something about someone else, in that person's presence, which only that person is in a position to know—accomplishes a frame shift by realigning participants. Just as Strachle shows that conversational participants align themselves to each other and create their relationship by teasing, Schiffrin shows that by speaking for someone else who is present and by allowing oneself to be spoken for, the participants in this conversational interview negotiate their relationships to each other as well as their gender identities. Thus, global or macro level relationships are created as well as evidenced by local or micro level moves that align, or frame, participants in relation to each other.

In Schiffrin's analysis, Henry and Zelda both speak for Irene, their neighbor and friend, who is significantly younger than they, but they frame themselves differently in doing so. Zelda's realignments are supportive and integrative: by speaking for her, she protects Irene from Henry's potential criticism. Henry's realignments are judgmental, challenging, and divisive: they align him with the interviewer in opposition to Irene, negatively evalu-

ate her behavior, and prompt her to reveal potentially compromising information, although he does, like Zelda, take a protective stance toward her.

Schiffrin goes on to examine types of framing found in the sociolinguistic interview and shows that the interview itself provides a frame for the realignments and identity displays she previously discussed. Although speaking for another occurs both within and outside the interview frame, it occurs only during question/answer exchanges. On the broadest level, by speaking for Irene, Zelda and Henry display and reinforce the closeness of their relationship with her and also transform the interview frame. Schiffrin's tripartite conclusion demonstrates that (1) sequential coherence in discourse results from the availability of a range of interpretive frames; (2) speaking for another is a ritualization of the submersion of the self in interaction which constitutes the interactive process itself; and (3) an understanding of how participants construct and shift gender identities and mutual alignments is crucial for the analysis of variation in sociolinguistic interviews.

Each chapter, then, applies aspects of frames theory to a unique interactional context to which frame analysis has not previously been applied. The volume thus demonstrates how frame analysis provides a framework for linguistic discourse analysis.

Organization of the Volume⁴

With the exception of the first chapter, which provides an introduction to frames theory, the chapters are arranged in descending order of the level of framing they primarily address. Chapters 2 through 4 use frame analysis to account for the nature of the events they examine. Chapter 2, by Tannen and Wallat, introduces a frames/schema model to elucidate the nature of the pediatrician's task in the examination/interview. Chapter 3, by Ribeiro, logically follows Tannen and Wallat both because it is concerned with a medical encounter and because it applies Tannen and Wallat's frames/schema model. More importantly, however, it uses frame analysis to characterize the nature of psychotic discourse. In Chapter 4, the study of boys' sportscasting play, the frame shifts that Hoyle describes actually give the event its character as sportscasting. Chapter 5, Smith's analysis of sermon performance, is liminal in terms of the level of framing it addresses. The concept of 'exegetical self' is an essential element of preaching but not in itself constitutive of it.

The remaining chapters link macro and micro levels of framing. The two types of framing identified by Watanabe in her study of American and Japanese discussion groups in Chapter 6 operate on the event and discourse levels, respectively. The first type, bracketing, by which participants open and close discussion, operates on the event level; conversational moves of the second type, such as presenting reasons and constructing arguments, operate on the local or discourse level. The last two chapters, by Straehle and

Schiffrin, focus on particular conversational moves within a larger event, and the role of these moves in the negotiation of relationships among participants. Thus they address framing at both more local and also more global levels than the other chapters. Within the casual conversation among friends that Strachle analyzes in Chapter 7, talk framed as teasing (a local level framing type) functions to establish a flirtatious intimacy between two speakers (framing at the global, relationship level). Analogously, Schiffrin shows in Chapter 8 that within the context of a diffuse sociolinguistic interview (an interview which in many ways resembles a casual conversation among acquaintances and friends), "speaking for another" frames Irene, the younger neighbor, as somewhat childlike in relation to Zelda and Henry. The book, therefore, builds toward an appreciation of the role of framing in the most significant and pervasive realm of human interaction: the negotiation of interpersonal relations and personal identity.

Notes

1. In fact, Goffman makes this remark in reference to the work that appears as Chapter 2 in this volume.

2. Geertz (1983:158–159), in an illuminating ethnography of American academic ways of thinking, notes the odd career path by which academics tend to be trained at one of a few centers and then be consigned for life to some outlying college or university. I would add that academic departments tend to hire one person in each field or subfield, setting each scholar in intellectual isolation in the home institution, driven to seek collegial interchange outside the university at professional meetings.

3. This hypothesis is reminiscent of Fishman's (1978) observation that women in casual conversations at home with their husbands do the grunt work of keeping the conversation going.

4. A note on transcription conventions is in order because of minor differences in conventions employed in each chapter. Since, with the exception of Schiffrin, all the authors use transcription conventions based on Tannen (1984), there is uniformity in the gross characteristics, but each author uses a few idiosyncratic conventions adapted to the needs of her own study. This may be irritating to a reader who reads the volume through from beginning to end. Yet I have refrained from making the conventions uniform, since that would entail forcibly altering all but one author's transcript excerpts to make them conform to a single system, probably my own. Aside from the hegemonic implications of such a move, I am keenly aware of how central my transcription system is to my own analysis. Recent research (for example, Ochs 1979, Preston 1982, 1985, Edwards 1990) makes abundantly clear that transcription systems are not neutral and interchangeable but rather represent interpretation in themselves. Readers' indulgence is asked, therefore, in the matter of small differences in conventions from one chapter to the next. To prevent confusion, each chapter is followed by its own key to transcription conventions used in that chapter.

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