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FRAMES REVISITED

1. *Contrasting Concepts of Frame*

Öim and Saluveer, in the first round collection, are clearly correct in observing that there is no such thing as THE concept of frame but rather «a family of concepts and conceptions that share some basic characteristics but differ considerably in other aspects».

The papers in the first round collection are concerned, as the title of the collection indicates, with semantics. My own paper in that volume is different: it is concerned not so much with frame semantics as with the semantics of interactional frames. This is a matter of semantics in that the ultimate concern is meaning, but it is different in that it focuses attention on the way meaning is negotiated in interaction, rather than focusing on the word or the sentence in order to ask what it means by itself. My paper in the first round is different from the others, as well, in taking as its data discourse recorded in actual interaction rather than sentences devised by the author. In this, it is sociolinguistic rather than linguistic, if one takes a frames approach to academic disciplines – that is, identifying a discipline by the methodological conventions which have come to be expected by those experienced with prior work in the discipline. Closest to the notion of frames discussed by the other contributors is what I call KNOWLEDGE STRUCTURE SCHEMAS: «expectations based on prior experience about objects, events, and settings». What I call INTERACTIVE FRAMES are, as the term suggests, the more interactional and hence the more different; a frame, in this sense, is «a superordinate definition of what is being done by talk, what activity is being engaged in, HOW a speaker means what s/he says». It might also be thought of as an interpretive frame. Knowledge structure schemas are in the mind; interactive frames are in the mind too, but they are more palpably in the interaction.

A person sitting alone in a room has a myriad knowledge structure schemas filling her head, but no interactive frames, except insofar as she is imagining

interaction with another person. A person talking to herself is having a certain kind of dialogue with herself and therefore is engaging interactive frames: for example, whether she is berating or congratulating herself results in consequent choices at every linguistic level. Knowledge structure schemas are, in a sense, timeless; interactive frames exist only in real time: ongoing, created and played out from moment to moment. Interactive frames, but not knowledge structure schemas, are always a matter of two logical types: the concrete, particular way of speaking in the interaction, and the abstract set of associations that identifies the culturally significant interactive goal being served by that way of speaking.

## 2. *Interactive Frames as Coherence*

Öim and Saluveer contend that we do not find 'frame' as a technical term – «i.e. as a term integrated into the system of conceptual and formal means of the science». While valid, this contention should not, I believe, be seen as a criticism. It is simply descriptive of a necessary situation. Becker<sup>1</sup> cautions against the danger of seeing «abstraction as a means of knowing» – that is, assuming that the most general is the most true. He suggests, instead, that frames, like other epistemologies, may best be understood as «a unique set of overlayed particularities». Frames are unique to individuals – a constellation of their particular experience. Reference to framing, in general, entails a jump in logical typing (to use the conceptual framework of Gregory Bateson, following Bertrand Russell).

This view is similar to that held by Zvegincev in the first round, who cites Humboldt as the source of the observation that «language is an activity, which uses certain means, rather than a set of means». These certain means can be seen as the particularities Becker refers to, and the «set of means» can be seen as the correspondences – the set of possible means which can be observed if one makes a leap in logical types to a higher level of abstraction. Thus, the general outlines of framing are understood not by atomistic structural representation of components of frames but by seeing the relationships among an array of particular dimensions of framing.

Becker suggests that there are six kinds of framing, six separate systems of relations that contribute to textual (and human) coherence. These are:

- 1) framing of text by text
- 2) framing of text by memory
- 3) framing of text by interpersonal setting (i.e. social constraints)
- 4) framing of text by nature
- 5) framing of text by silence
- 6) framing of text by the medium

<sup>1</sup> My extensive references to the work of Becker are based on a combination of personal communication and his unpublished paper entitled *Correspondences*.

In order to illustrate these constraints with reference to a text familiar to all, I shall take as a text an article in the first round collection – the one by Zvegincev.

(1) The framing of text by text refers to intra-textual relations: parts of the text to each other and to the whole. Here are included sentence-level cohesive relationships such as embedding and anaphora as well as discourse-level coherence relationships such as the introduction, transitions, and conclusion in relation to the whole text. These are structural relationships, as observed by an individual who regards the text.

(2) The framing of text by memory refers to the conventions of what Becker calls prior text; in this case, prior text includes other scholarly articles which the author and readers have experienced. Intertextual relations reside in the individual's experience of prior text plus the transformations of that experience through time and the individual imagination.

(3) The framing of text by interpersonal setting in this instance refers to the situation: the context of a scholarly paper, and the participation of the author as a scholar, of editors, and of prospective readers and the author's sense of how to accommodate to them.

(4) The framing of text by nature would include properties of a believed world beyond language, which is being described in the sentences which the article discusses.

(5) The framing of text by silence refers to the many – the infinite – things that are not said in the article, and those that are unsayable.

(6) The framing of text by the medium refers to the many ways the nature of this article is determined by the fact that it was written, and then printed, rather than having been spoken, sung, or chanted.

I will say a little more about one of these coherence constraints, the second one. The framing of text by memory, or prior text, accounts for the structure of the article – what it says in what order with what discourse markers and transition phrases – making it recognizable as an instance of an identifiable type of discourse. As is always the case, one is likely to observe such conventions only when they differ from one's own expectations. Thus I noticed, and found charming, the way the paper ended – with a literary quotation, an elaborate metaphor, and a statement about the nature of humankind, phrased in the diction of literary discourse:

The competence-oriented linguists first entreat «the swift moment: Tarry a while! You are so fair!» (Faust, Part One, Lines 1699-1700), and then start a meticulous analysis of the matter «the swift moment» is made of. Whatever the stuff is be it rock, clay, chalk, or brick – it cannot be used to build not only the Cathedral of Cologne but even an ordinary house if it is not part of the creative impulse which man always possesses.

The conventions by which it is appropriate to conclude a scholarly article with the verb 'entreat', followed by a quotation from Faust and a flowery statement about 'man' are determined by culturally shaped experience – what Becker would call prior text. For most American academic prose, these con-

ventions are not typical. I suspect that they are so for Russian articles of this type; they are similar to conventions for modern Greek discourse, as I discovered in an earlier study [Tannen 1980] and contrasted with American conventions for formal discourse of a related type. In seeking sources for the differences between the narratives told by Greeks and Americans about a film, I compared American and Greek movie reviews and found that the American review focused on critical statements about film-making technique whereas the Greek review built toward grand statements about 'man'. Readers may have noted that I used the term 'humankind' whereas Zvegincev used the term 'man' in his last sentence. Our choices of terms can be seen as constrained in a similar way: what terms we have encountered in other texts, the way we imagine potential readers will respond to our use of terms, and the demands of conventions for the written medium. In this way, frames can be seen as the workings of the set of constraints at every level of text, and on every text, including this one.

#### REFERENCES

- Tannen, Deborah [1980], *A comparative analysis of oral narrative strategies: Athenian Greek and American English*, in Wallace L. Chafe (ed.), *The pear stories: Cognitive, cultural, and linguistic aspects of narrative production*, Norwood, NJ, Ablex, pp. 51-87.