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FRAMES AND SCRIPTS

The notion of a domain—especially in cases where the domain is cognitively quite complex, or where a linguistic form needs to be characterized against several domains simultaneously—overlaps to a large extent with what others have referred to variously as frames, scripts, schemata, scenes, scenarios, and idealized cognitive models; Putnam's stereotypes also appear to coincide with our notion of a prototype seen in the context of the relevant domain matrix. The terminology in this area is confusing, partly because different terms may be used by different authors to refer to what seems to be the same construct, or the same term may be used to refer to different constructs. Furthermore, it is not at all clear that it is possible to make clean conceptual distinctions in this area. Nevertheless, I have found the term 'frame' to be a useful theoretical term, denoting the knowledge network linking the multiple domains associated with a given linguistic form. We can reserve the term 'script' for the temporal sequencing and causal relations which link events and states within certain action frames.

Frames and scripts are constructs which were originally developed by researchers in the field of artificial intelligence. The constructs made it possible to represent in computer memory those aspects of world knowledge which appear to be involved in the natural processing of texts. The constructs have also proved invaluable in studies of natural comprehension. According to de Beaugrande and Dressier [1, 90], frames constitute 'global patterns' of 'common sense knowledge about some central concept', such that the lexical item denoting the concept typically evokes the whole frame. In essence, frames are static configurations of knowledge. Scripts, on the other hand, are more dynamic in nature. Typically, scripts are associated with what we have referred to earlier as basic level events such as 'do the washing up' and 'visit the doctor', which are structured according to the expected sequencing of subordinate events.

As an illustration of the notion of frame, let us reconsider Lakoff's discussion of *mother* [2, 91]. The five domains against which this word needs to be characterized do not constitute a random set. It is the structured whole that I shall call the 'mother frame'. According to the mother frame, a mother is a woman who has sexual relations with the father, falls pregnant, gives birth, and then for the following decade or so devotes much of her time to nurturing and raising the child, remaining all the while married to the father. In such a situation all five domains converge. Clearly, such a scenario is highly idealized, in that the frame abstracts away from its many untypical instantiations. Unmarried mothers, for whatever reasons, do not have the marriage relationship with the father; in the case of children given for adoption, there is a split between the genetic and birth domains on the one hand and the nurturance domain on the other; surrogate motherhood results in a splitting off of the genetic domain from the birth domain; alternatively the nurturance domain might undergo a split, in that the birth-giving mother remains responsible for nurturance, while the actual job of nurturing is taken over by someone else, e.g. a nanny or a grandparent. It is against the background of the idealized scenario that we characterize a prototypical mother. Adoptive mothers, surrogate mothers, stepmothers, unmarried mothers, widowed mothers, uncaring mothers, even perhaps so-called working mothers, are more marginal members of the category. Ultimately, the frame embodies deeply held beliefs about the status and role of the family in society. To this extent, it is irrelevant to ask whether prototypical mothers are in fact of more frequent occurrence than less prototypical members of the category. Some people might well believe that the idealized scenario does in fact constitute the norm; others might be more sceptical, but might at the same time believe in the desirability, at least, of the idealized scenario, while others vehemently reject it for its sexist assumptions. Neither is the idealized scenario immune to change. Some readers might feel that my account of prototypical motherhood is already outdated.

Clearly, then, frames do not necessarily incorporate scientifically validated knowledge of the world. Take again the example of *Monday*. We would want to include in the frame the knowledge that Monday is the first working day after a

culturally institutionalized weekend, that on Mondays people reluctantly return to the routine of work after their weekend leisure, and that it generally takes them a little time to readjust to the work pattern. Again, the knowledge is idealized. It is hardly relevant to housewives, or to people who work at weekends and have Mondays free. Other people might be only too eager to return to work after the boredom of the weekend, while people on vacation have both weekends and Mondays free. And, just as with the *mother* example, the idealization of the frame seems to rest, ultimately, on deeply entrenched cultural beliefs and practices. In this case we have to do with the division (inherited from the Jewish tradition) of our life into alternating periods of work and periods of rest.

The mental lexicon, although encyclopaedic in nature, includes but a subset of a person's total knowledge. But where, and on what basis, do we draw the line? Brown and Yule consider that the outstanding problem for frame and script theory is to find 'a *principled* means' for distinguishing between those aspects of world knowledge that are relevant to text processing, and those which are not. Wierzbicka also recognizes the importance of this issue by consistently making a distinction between knowledge *of* a concept and knowledge *about* a concept. The distinction is drawn in terms of whether a particular piece of knowledge associated with a concept shows up in linguistic expressions.

The objection is unjustified, as it presupposes a clear dividing line between linguistically relevant and linguistically irrelevant knowledge. Frames, as I have stressed, are configurations of culture-based, conventionalized knowledge. Most importantly, the knowledge encapsulated in a frame is knowledge which is shared, or which is believed to be shared, by at least some segment of a speech community.

Literature

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